

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JOHN WILKINS

WARDEN OF WADHAM COLLEGE, OXFORD
MASTER OF TRINITY COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE
AND BISHOP OF CHESTER





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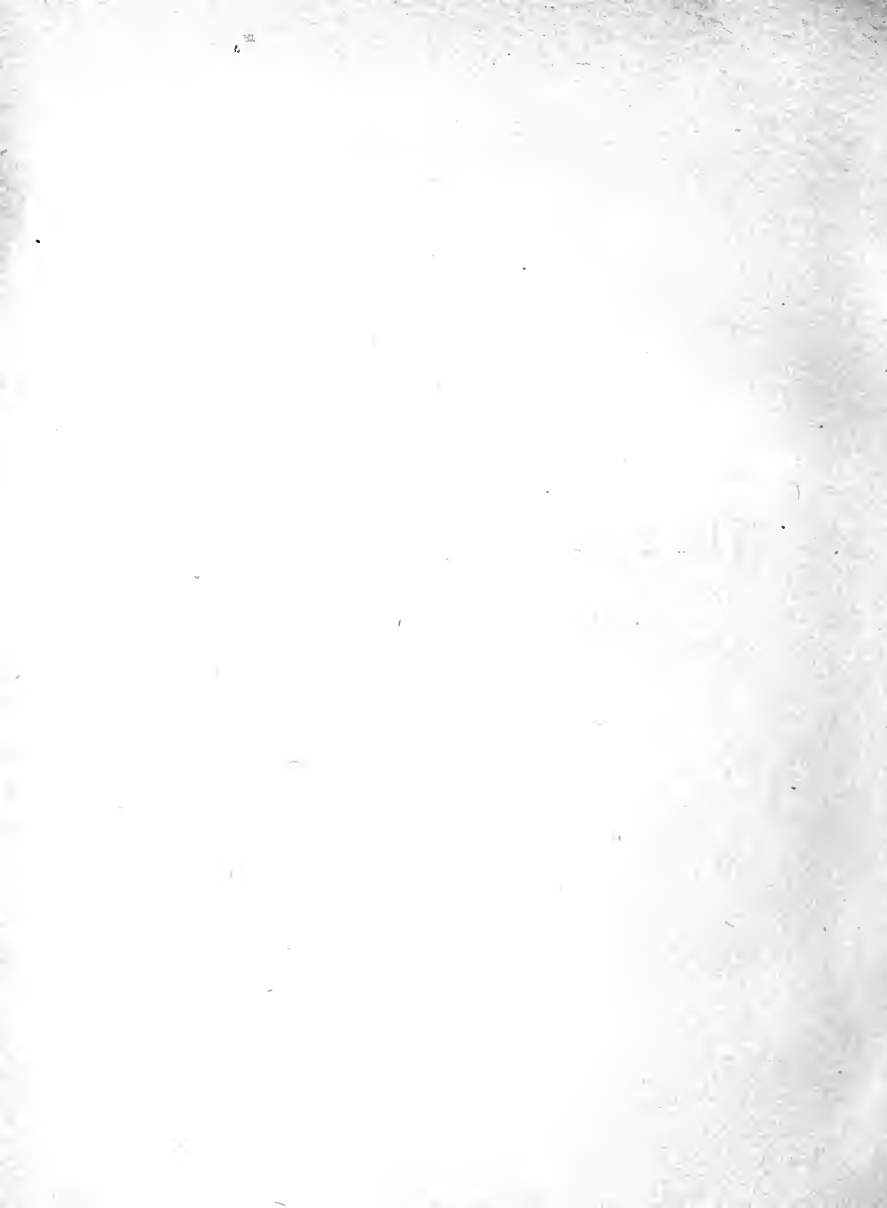
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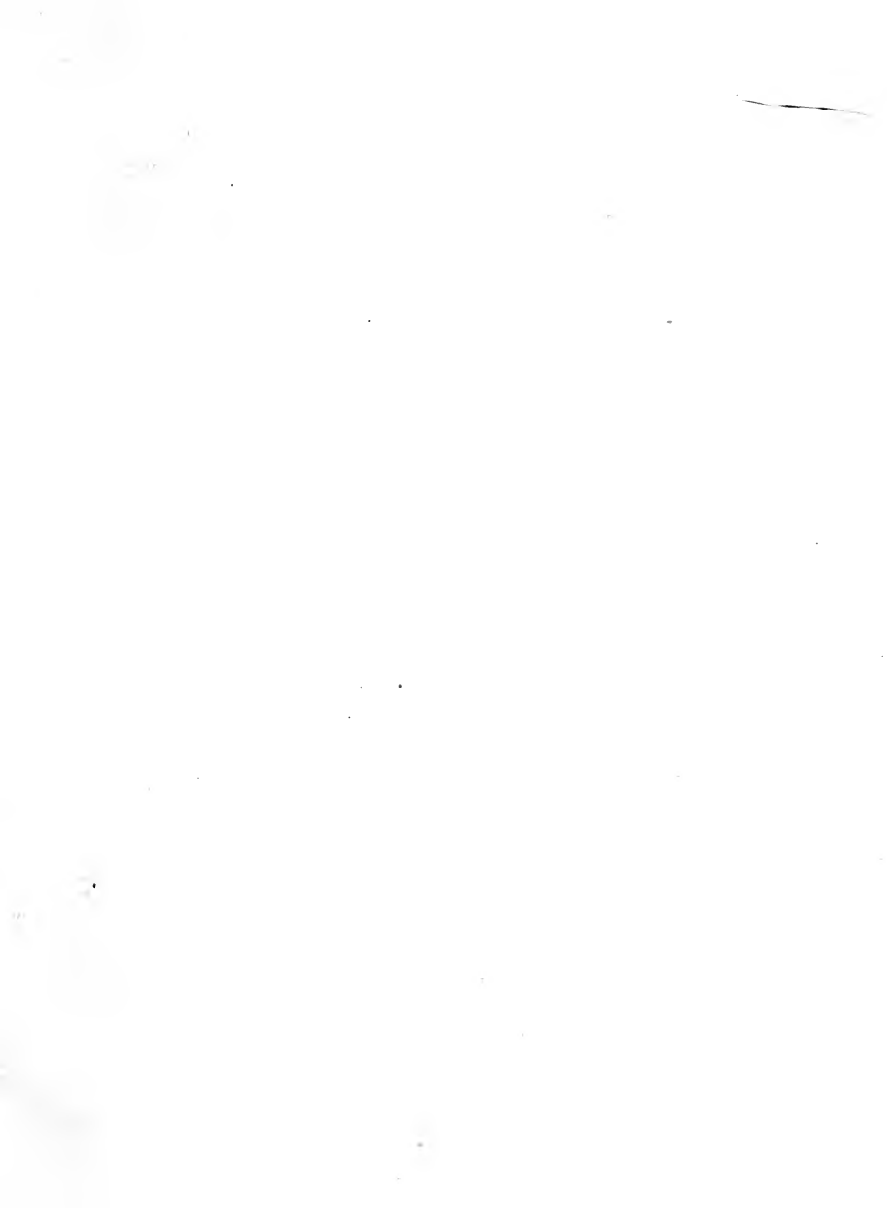
L. F. F. Hooch

from P. A. W. H.

(June 1810)

The Life and Times of
John Wilkins







WARDEN WILKINS.

The Life and Times of John Wilkins

Warden of Wadham College, Oxford;
Master of Trinity College, Cambridge;
and Bishop of Chester

BY

Patrick
P. A. WRIGHT HENDERSON

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WARDEN OF WADHAM COLLEGE, OXFORD

William Blackwood and Sons
Edinburgh and London

1910

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DEDICATED TO
THE MEMBERS OF WADHAM COLLEGE.

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P R E F A C E.

THIS little book is written as an offering to the Members of Wadham College for the Tercentenary of its foundation. The writer makes no pretensions to learning or research: the title of the book would be misleading and ridiculous if taken to imply a profound study of the times of Bishop Wilkins, from his birth in 1614 to his death in 1672, the most important, perhaps, certainly the most interesting, in the history of Great Britain. It has been attempted only to touch on the great questions and events which shaped the life and character of a remarkable man. Use has been made freely and often, without due acknowledgment, of the 'History of Wadham

College,' written by Mr T. G. Jackson, R.A., one of its Honorary Fellows and distinguished alumni; a history of the building and architecture of the College, which no one but he could have written,—a history also of its social and academical life from its beginning to the present day.

Nor has less use been made of Mr J. Wells' History of the College, of which he is a Fellow. He will, I am sure, pardon my impertinence in saying that in his book are combined diligent research and a sense of humour and of the picturesque, excellences rarely found together in historians. Mr R. B. Gardiner, formerly Scholar of Wadham, has earned its gratitude by his invaluable 'Registers of Admissions,' which, it is to be hoped, he will bring down to 1910 or later: they will make easy the work of some member of the College, who will doubtless arise to write a *magnum opus*, the history of the College in every aspect—architectural, social, and academical.

For it the writer will use, as I have done

for this little book, the notes and comments of Mr Andrew Clark on Wood's 'Life and Times,' and other volumes published by the Oxford Historical Society.

My thanks are due also to Dr Butler, the Master of Trinity, Cambridge, for his kindness in telling me what little there is to tell of Wilkins' short tenure of the Mastership.

The Bishop of Chester, Dr Jayne, formerly a Scholar of Wadham, now Bishop of the Diocese which Wilkins held, has helped me with information about the short episcopate of his predecessor. For it I am grateful to him, as well for the suggestion or command which led to my first attempt, made four years ago, to write something about Wilkins.

The too short article in the 'Dictionary of National Biography' has been of much service: it gives the bibliography of the subject, or an equivalent, for no life of Wilkins has been written till now, and indicates the sources of information about him: it also puts in clear order the events of his varied life. Mr Sanders

must know much which he should be gently forced to tell.

Fain would I acknowledge to Wood and Aubrey the debt I owe to them, especially to Wood, and ask his pardon for occasional ill-natured remarks about him, as ill-natured nearly as his own about most of his contemporaries.

The only merit claimed for this *libellus* is its brevity—no small recommendation in this age of “exhaustive treatment” when, in bibliography especially, it is difficult to see the wood for the trees. It is an inadequate expression of the writer’s affection for the College in which he has spent more than forty years of his life, and the unvarying kindness and indulgence which he has received from pupils and colleagues.

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THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JOHN WILKINS.

CHAPTER I.

HISTORY OF THE COLLEGE FROM ITS FOUNDATION
TO THE BEGINNING OF WILKINS' WARDENSHIP.

WADHAM COLLEGE was founded in 1610, when on July 31st the foundation-stone was laid; and opened in 1613, when, on April 20th, the Warden and Fellows elected by the Foundress were admitted; the Warden, by the Vice-Chancellor of the University in St Mary's Church; the fifteen Fellows by the Warden in the College Hall; the fifteen Scholars by the Warden and Fellows in the same place.

All of them, from the Warden to the Junior Scholars, were sworn to obey the Statutes of the College, save three of the Scholars, who were supposed to be too young to understand the nature of an oath.

A site had been found on the ground where had stood the Priory of the Augustine Friars, founded in 1268—suppressed in 1540. It had been gradually removed or destroyed by time and plunder of its materials: no traces of it are left, except on the west side of the Warden's garden, a postern-gate which he maintains was used by the friars for various purposes. Another memorial of the Priory survived till 1800—the phrase of “doing Austins.” Up to that date, or near it, every Bachelor of Arts was required once in each year to “dispute and answer ad Augustinenses,” and the chapel or refectory of the Priory were convenient places in which to hold the disputations. In the University no official title, no name indeed of any kind, escapes abbreviation or worse indignity, instances of which will readily

suggest themselves to the mind of any Oxford reader.

The founders were Nicholas Wadham and Dorothy, his wife, of Merrifield and Edge in the county of Somerset. He was a squire of good estate and high degree, the last male descendant of the main line of Wadhams. Born in 1532, he was educated at Corpus or at Christ Church: there is a conflict of testimony on this point, but Corpus was probably his college. At the age of twenty-three he married Dorothy Petre. She was two years younger than her husband, born in 1534, the daughter of Sir William Petre of Writtle in Essex, near which much of the College property now lies. For his zeal in suppressing the monasteries Sir William had been rewarded by the grant of a large estate, and Wadham, so long a Whig and Evangelical College, was by the vicissitudes of fortune built both pecuniarily and materially on the ruins of the Roman Catholic Church.

The young couple were wealthy and lived their lives in state at Merrifield, where they

kept an open house, "an inn at all times for their friends, and a court at Christmas." Yet, owing probably to the management of Dorothy, a notable and prudent wife, they saved money, and the childless pair determined to devote their wealth to "the purposes of religion, learning, and education." Their creed, like that of many waverers in those days of transition, was by no means clear, possibly even to themselves. The Wadhams were suspected of being Recusants, and Dorothy was presented as such, even in the year 1613 when the College was completed. This may have given rise to Antony Wood's story that Nicholas was minded to found a College at Venice for Roman Catholic students, but the balance of probabilities is against its truth.

It has been pointed out by Mr Jackson, on the suggestion of Mr Thorley, the late Warden, that "the discovery of the Gunpowder Plot in 1605 may have weakened his (Wadham's) attachment, in common with that of many liberal and loyal Catholics, to the cause of the

old faith"; further, that "the Venice scheme comes very near, if it does not amount to, an offence which the law had anticipated and actually forbidden, and it would have exposed its author to the direful penalties of *Pramunire*, which by a Statute of 27 Elizabeth were denounced against any person contributing to the support of any College of Jesuits, or Seminary, erected, or hereafter to be erected, beyond the sea": and finally, Mr Jackson dwells on many evidences from facts that the Founder was in his later years strictly conformable to the Reformed Church. These are weighty arguments, and to them may be added others worthy of consideration. To a daughter of Sir William Petre her husband's design, if he ever entertained it, would have been more than distasteful, for its fulfilment would have meant a confession of sacrilege committed by her father and acquiesced in by herself: it would have meant also the establishment of a college beyond the sea, removed from the Founder's supervision and control. No one who knows human nature,

or daughters, or Dorothy Wadham, can regard the story as more than an interesting fiction. And yet, is there no foundation for Wood's circumstantial narrative? Does the fact that the Foundress was presented as a Recusant mean nothing? The problem is one worthy of the industry and ingenuity of Mr Andrew Lang.

The Founder died at the age of seventy-seven years in 1609. He was buried in "Myne Ile at Ilminster, where myne ancestors lye interred." The funeral was one befitting, in the estimation of those days, the obsequies of an important country gentleman: it cost £500, equivalent now to a sum sufficient for the public funeral of some great statesman. It is easy to condemn our ancestors; but their modes of extravagance were less frivolous than ours, if equally irrational.

The building accounts have been preserved in the account-book treasured in the College archives: in it is recorded "every item of stone, wood, or metal used, and every workman's name and weekly wages," an important contribution to the history of prices. The architect was

William Arnold, who combined in himself, as did architects in the middle ages and later, the functions of head workman, master mason, architect, and clerk of works in one—a master builder. The stones came from the quarries at Headington and Shotover; the slates from Stonesfield and Burford. Part of the beauty of the College is due to the soft colouring of the silver-grey stone, honeycombed and crumbled, on the south and west especially, where sun and wind and rain beat on it, giving it the appearance of indefinite antiquity; an appearance due, alas! also to the fact that stone from Headington is very friable, and little able to resist the Oxford air.

One of the true College stories runs to the effect that Warden Griffiths used the account-book to refute the contention of a great historian of British architecture that Wadham College must have been built at different dates, because its architecture is of different styles—an improper combination of Jacobean and Perpendicular. Dr Griffiths was the kindest of men, but the

most accurate, and it gave him, for he was human, great pleasure to correct mistakes. He listened silently to the great man's argument: next morning, at a large breakfast party given in the College Common Room to the members of the British Association which met at Oxford in the year 1847, he quietly laid the Account-Book beside the plate of the unhappy dogmatist. The fact that the Chapel is Perpendicular while the Quadrangle is late Gothic has been explained by the late Mr J. H. Parker's reasonable, perhaps fanciful, suggestion that "the architect desired to emphasise by this variation of style the religious and secular uses of the several structures."¹

Wadham has been described by Ayliffe, and without much protest, as being "in respect of beauty the most regular and uniform of any in the University." It is the best specimen of that late Gothic style which makes the charm of Oxford, and which Mr Jackson has helped to preserve by his work there and elsewhere.

¹ See Messrs Peel and Minchin's 'Oxford,' p. 130.

The beauty of Wadham is of a singularly quiet and simple kind, the effect of proportion, of string-courses and straight lines, marred by little decoration. Except for buildings annexed from time to time, so plain that they are no disfigurement, the College stands as it stood three centuries ago. Mr Andrew Lang has remarked that it is "the only College in Oxford which has not been fiddled with"; this is high praise, and gratefully accepted. One defect the College has: the resources of the Founders sufficed to build only one quadrangle; they had not counted the cost of the stately Chapel and Hall, and little was left for College rooms. When will our benefactor come? But it would be ungracious in Wadham men to criticise the Founders of their College, to whom they owe the most beautiful of homes. It stood fifty years ago almost in the country, with nothing north or east of it save the Museum and green fields. It is still in a great measure what it was called, the Country College; for though it has neighbours close to it in Mansfield and

Manchester Colleges, yet these and the cricket-grounds, which lie between Wadham and the Cherwell, and further north, the Parks, make one spacious region of almost country,—a region of grass and trees and silence, broken only by the sounds of birds, and the shouts of Matthew Arnold's "young barbarians all at play."

It is a quiet old College,—not old as age is reckoned in Oxford,—like some great Elizabethan or Jacobean country-house turned into a College, splendid yet homely, possessing that double charm which no palace or castle or cathedral possesses in the same degree,—the charm of stately beauty and the charm of human interest which belongs to the home of generations who have spent there the happiest years of life, preparing for themselves distinction and success, or obscurity and failure. As you stand in the well-known College garden, one side of which is bounded by the chapel and long line of wall and gables showing half-white half-grey against the sward from which they

rise, you might fancy, if you were a Platonist, that here Plato might have realised the dream of his Republic, and made a home for the chosen youths who were to rule and defend his state; here amid things beautiful "from which come effluences wholesome for the soul, like a breeze bringing health from blessed regions."

The Educated Woman, with her unerring perception of the fitness of things, has already, it is whispered, marked Wadham for her own when the day of reckoning comes, and men will have to share with women not merely degrees but buildings and endowments. She has chosen well, for Tennyson could have imagined no fitter home for the Princess and her companions.

Four days before his death Nicholas Wadham told his nephew, Sir John Wyndham, what were his objects in founding his College, and what were the provisions he wished made to effect them. His "instructions," two of which seemed strange to his nephew, and to need careful wording, ran as follows: "The one was that he would have an especial Statute to

be made that neyther the head of the house, nor any of the fellowes should be married; the other that he would not tye any man to any profession, as eyther devinitie, lawe, or phisicke, but leave every man free to profess what he liked, as it should please God to direct him. He then told me that after they weare Masters of Arte of a competent number of yeares, that then he would have them absolutely to departe the Colledge, and not live there all their lives like idle drones, but put themselves into the world, whereby others might growe up under them, his intente being chiefly to nourishe and trayne up men into Learninge. On the 19th of October, when he sealed the deede, I told him howe necessary it was for him to have a visitor of his Colledge, all the Colledges of Oxford having some Bishoppe appointed by the Founder for seeinge of the Statutes put in execution; and that in my opinion there was none fitter than the Bishoppe of Bathe and Welles, which he much applauded, and thanked me muche for putting him in minde



NICHOLAS WADHAM.



of him; he also then sayd he would have his Colledge to be called Wadham Colledge."

Our ancestors knew what they meant and how to express it in good English, though their spelling was irregular. In his instructions the Founder anticipated reforms made by the Commissioners of 1853 and 1882. They had the benefit of two and a half centuries' experience of national and academical life to guide them: Nicholas Wadham foresaw things and needs not foreseen or understood by his contemporaries or predecessors. His Fellowships were to be, all of them, open to laymen, and terminable after a tenure of years in which a young lawyer, or physician, might maintain and prepare himself till he had made a practice: eighteen years were allowed for that purpose, instead of the scanty seven with which a Prize Fellow must now content himself. It may be that Nicholas gave too much and the Commissioners gave too little; but that is a doubtful question.

The Wardenship, as well as the Fellowships, could by the Founder's intention, and in the first

draft of the Statutes, be held without the condition of Holy Orders. The Foundress, in this matter only, disobeyed her husband, and at the wish of the Society altered the Statutes, and by binding the Warden to take his Doctorate in Divinity made the office clerical for two hundred and sixty years. In all other points she followed the instructions which she may herself to some extent have inspired. Her Visitor was to be the Bishop of the diocese in which she had spent her life; her Warden was to be "a virtuous and honourable man of stainless life, not a bishop, nor a foreigner but born in Britain": the last word is significant. It was inserted in the Statutes by James I. in place of "England": even Dr Griffiths is known to have spoken of England as the kingdom in which he lived: further, the Warden was to be "thirty years old at least, and unmarried."

There is nothing in Dorothy's grim features to suggest that she would have approved of one of the reforms or perversions of her Statutes ordained by the Commissioners, which gives a place in her College to a married Warden and to

married Fellows, much less that she would have been willing to marry one of them herself. Thereby hangs a tale which might suggest a new situation to our exhausted novelists. The Foundress, so the story runs, chose for her first Warden a clergyman, Dr Robert Wright, whose *beaux yeux* touched the heart of the lone widow : she loved him, and would fain have married him and reigned with him after the necessary alteration of the Statutes ; but he was cold and irresponsible : the obligation of celibacy, save in the case of Warden Wilkins, remained incumbent on a Warden of Wadham till 1806, when it was removed by a special Act of Parliament. Modern criticism respects a love-story no more than it respects the Pentateuch. A comparison of dates shows that Dr Wright was fifty-four years old at the time of his appointment in 1613, and the Foundress was then seventy-nine. The difference of a quarter of a century makes the truth of the story not indeed impossible but improbable ; the coy Warden held his office only for two months : the cause of his resignation or

expulsion is not known, but was probably not "spretæ injuria formæ": the hero of the story wished to marry somebody else, and resigned his post because he was not permitted to do so, as Mr Wells informs us, adding a prosaic explanation of the lovers' quarrel, a disagreement about the appointment of an under-cook. Therefore "Dorothy's Romance" must take its place among the many College stories in which Oxford abounds, and become a forsaken belief. Wright was the first on the long roll of Wadham bishops, and played a not inconsiderable part at a crisis in English history. In December 1641, as Bishop of Lichfield, he was one of the twelve bishops who presented to Charles I. the famous protest against their exclusion by mob violence from the House of Lords, declaring all proceedings in their absence null and void: for this they were sent to the Tower as guilty of high treason. Wright was soon released, and died two years later defending his episcopal seat, Eccleshall Castle, against the Parliamentarians,—a member of the Church militant like Ancktill.



DOROTHY WADHAM.



The history of the College from its foundation to the beginning of the Civil War is uneventful, one of great prosperity. Among the Fellows admitted in 1613, three, Smyth, Estcott, and Pitt, became Wardens: four of the Fellows were drawn from Exeter, then, as now, a west-country College like Wadham, though it has, more than Wadham, maintained its connection with the West of England. The Foundress showed her resolve that her husband's countryside should be well represented among the first members of the foundation: of the fifteen Fellows, eleven—of the fifteen Scholars, ten, came from western counties, especially from Somerset; the Commoners also were many of them western men. The value to a College of a local connection, not with a village or a small school, but with a county or a large town, was not understood by the Commissioners of 1853: they were under the tyranny of the formulæ current in their day, when "open competition" was supposed to be the solution of all the difficulties of life.

In the first year of the College now opened

for work, fifty-one undergraduates, including the Scholars, were admitted. The number of its inmates, from the Warden to the latest freshman, was therefore sixty-nine, including the two chaplains. The rooms were larger than most of the rooms in the older colleges, but fewer, and those available for undergraduates were not more than about forty: the freshmen of 1613 must have been closely packed, the Scholars especially, who had rooms three together, sleeping in the large chamber and working in the *muscælae* or small studies attached, now used as bedrooms, or as scouts' pantries. In the nine years following the admissions were necessarily fewer—averaging twenty-seven. It is probable that till the depletion of Oxford, when the Civil War began—*i.e.*, during the first thirty years of its life—Wadham numbered on an average between eighty and ninety undergraduates, all of them resident in College, as was then required by the Statutes of the University. This estimate is based on imperfect data, and Mr Gardiner has pronounced that materials for any accurate

calculation are not to be found. We do not know what was the usual length of undergraduates' residence at that time; some resided only for a year, some proceeded to a degree. Nor is it clear whether the Warden used all the rooms, eight in number, assigned to him, or gave, perhaps rented, some of them to undergraduates. The estimate, which can neither be confirmed nor disproved, is worth making only as helping us to imagine the condition of the College in its early days. One thing is certain, that Wadham was popular and fashionable, to use a modern curious name, as is shown by the record of admissions.

Life, both for graduates and undergraduates, was harder then than it is now. The Fellows were required to reside for forty-six weeks, the Scholars, and probably the Commoners, for forty-eight weeks in each year. All undergraduates had to attend lectures or disputations for twenty-four hours in every week. These tasks were arranged with careful malignity to begin at 6 A.M., and resumed at 2 P.M. and 6 P.M. Nor were examinations wanting. The

Bible was to be read during dinner in Hall by a Bible Clerk or Scholar, and heard attentively and reverently. Latin was to be spoken in Hall, and English only when the presence of an unlearned person or of a member of another college justified its use. The Chapel Service was held between 5 and 6 A.M. and between 8 and 9 P.M.; and attendance twice a-day was required from bachelors and undergraduates, and rigidly enforced. Attendance at roll-call as a substitute for chapel was unheard of in those days, when all members of the colleges were, or were presumed to be, members also of the Church of England, nor would conscientious scruples have been treated with much courtesy. In other matters discipline was no less strict; clothes and boots were to be black, and gowns were to be long. No undergraduate was allowed to go out of College unaccompanied by a "discrete senior" of mature age as a witness to his good behaviour, unless to attend a lecture or a disputation: nor might he keep dogs, or guns, or ferrets, or any bird, within the pre-

cincts of the College, nor play any games with dice or cards or of any unseemly kind. Yet the Foundress showed a tenderness for human weakness by permitting the Fellows and Scholars to play cards in Hall on some of the Gaudy days for "moderate stakes and at timeous hours." Moreover, she ordained that £30 from the College revenues should be spent on College banquets to be held on Gaudy days, by which were meant the great Church festivals, the election days of Fellows and College officers, All Saints' Day, and, on what at first sight seems strange, the anniversary of her husband's death ; but the strangeness disappears if it be remembered that October 20th comes close to All Saints' Day.

This seems, in some of its provisions, Draconian legislation, but it was made for the government of boys, many of them only fourteen or fifteen years of age : how far it was, even in early days, unflinchingly enforced, we cannot tell. It began to fall into abeyance after the Restoration, if we are to believe

Antony Wood. His statements are always to be received with caution; but they are on this point confirmed by other testimonies, and by the antecedent probability of a strong reaction against the Puritan *régime*. Eighteen months after the King's Restoration, he writes of the decay of learning and discipline in the University. "Before the warr wee had scholars that made a thorough search in scholasticall and polemicall divinity, in humane authors, and naturall philosophy. But now scholars studie these things not more than what is just necessary to carry them through the exercises of their respective Colleges and the Universitie. Their aime is not to live as students ought to do—viz., temperat, abstemious, and plaine and grave in the apparel; but to live like gentlemen, to keep dogs and horses, to turne their studies and coleholes into places to receive bottles, to swash it in apparell, to wear long periwigs, &c., and the theologists to ride abroad in grey coats with swords by their sides: the masters have lost their respect by being them-

selves scandalous, and keeping company with undergraduates." We cannot believe that Wadham escaped the contagion, and remained what its Foundress meant it to be. It would be interesting—but lack of space forbids—to compare the discipline prescribed with that administered in Wadham now. Sufficient to say—what indeed might go without saying—that the lapse of three hundred years has made changes desirable and necessary.

The Foundress died on May 16, 1618, aged eighty-four. For five years she had watched over the infancy of her College, and had seen it grow into a vigorous child, with the promise of a robust manhood. The mythopœic faculty is strong in all of us, and in Wadham has grown up a tradition that Dorothy was a strong-minded woman, and her husband a submissive man without character and will. The myth rests only on the science of physiognomy working on portraits,—a most insecure foundation. The Founders' portraits depict him as a gentle, placid person with melancholy eyes;

her as a hard-featured woman, with a long upper lip and an almost cruel mouth. Against the testimony, always dubious, of portraits, must be set the known facts of her loyal devotion in carrying out his wishes with scrupulous fidelity, and the sacrifices she made in doing so, of money and of laborious supervision in the last years of her long life.

The College may do well to remember the closing of one of her last letters to the Warden and Fellows: "Above all things, I would have you to avoid contentions among yourselves, for without true charity there cannot be a true Society."—(Wells' 'History of Wadham,' p. 44.) She was buried beside her husband in the Wadham aisle at Ilminster.

Only a few months after her death a question arose in which she would have taken a keen interest, and have supported her College to the uttermost. In October 1618 James I. set an example, which his grandson, James II., followed, of that contempt for law which proved fatal to the Stuarts. He wrote to his

“trusty and well beloved, the Warden and Fellows of Wadham College, bidding them elect Walter Durham of St Andrews a Fellow, notwithstanding anything in their statutes to the contrary.” Durham had not been a scholar, and the vacancy had been filled up by the Foundress, for whose death “their eyes were still wet.” It is possible that Durham’s being a Scotchman was another objection to his reception as a Fellow in those days when his aggressive countrymen had found the high-road to England: this objection the Society did not put before the King, but pleaded only the obligations of the statutes. Supported by the Earl of Pembroke, the Chancellor of the University, their resistance was successful. To Wadham belongs the honour of being the earliest Oxford champion of legality in the struggle of seventy years: as to Magdalen belongs the honour of the resistance which brought that struggle nearly to its close. From 1618 onward till—who can say when? the College has been on the popular or constitutional side,

save in 1648. The portrait of James I., who gave the College its Charter, hangs in the Hall; there are no portraits there of Charles I., Charles II., James II.

Among the admissions of this time the most illustrious name is that of Robert Blake, who matriculated at Alban Hall, but took his B.A. from Wadham in 1618, a few months before the Durham incident. The great admiral and soldier may therefore have learnt in Wadham the opinions which determined his choice of sides in the Parliamentary wars. The College possesses his portrait, and four gold medals struck to commemorate his victory over Van Tromp in 1653. It has never left the custody of the Warden, save when it was sent, concealed on the person of Professor and Commander Burroughs, to the Naval Exhibition some years ago; and last year, when after an interesting correspondence between the College and Colonel Maxse commanding the Coldstream Guards, leave was cordially given to that distinguished regiment to have an electrotype made

of the Blake medal for its own exclusive use, and to be kept *in perpetuum* among the memorials of its long history. It is the oldest regiment in the service, the only survivor of Cromwell's New Model; it was commanded by Monk, afterwards Duke of Albemarle, when he crossed the border to march to London, perhaps with no definite intention to restore the Monarchy—perhaps also prompted by his brother Nicholas, a Wadham man, to solve the great problem in that simple way. The rest of the New Model were disbanded after the Restoration, but, doubtless in deference to Monk, the Coldstreams were reformed, and became the King's Bodyguard. To Monk, who like Blake was half soldier, half sailor, one of the four medals had been awarded for his services against the Dutch. It was lost, and the replica will take its place. The other three medals are preserved—one in the possession of the representatives of the Penn family, one in the British Museum, one in Wadham: the last was sent to the British Museum for reproduction: it was carried

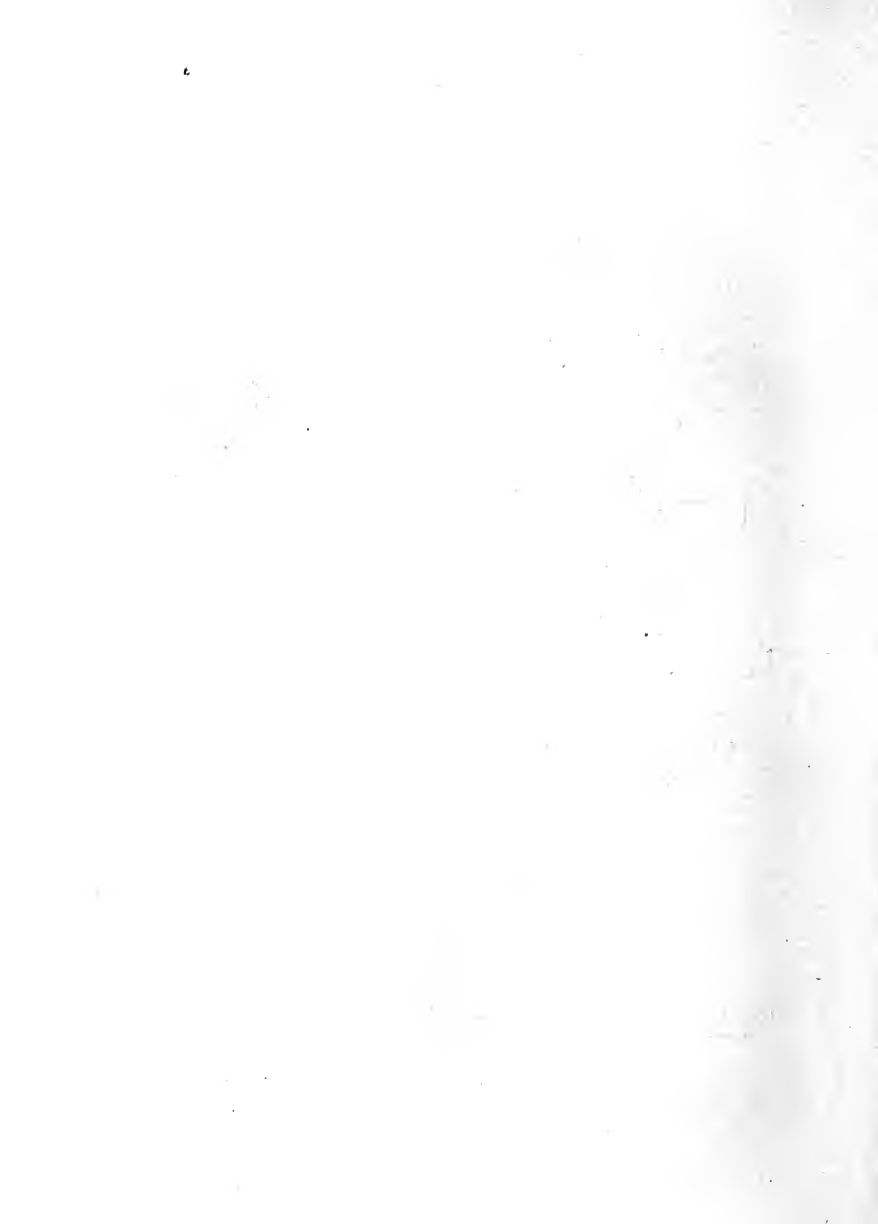
by our historian Mr Wells, returned by him, and it now lies in the Warden's lodgings, in the cabinet of treasures bequeathed by Dr Griffiths, our benefactor in many ways unknown but to his friends. This tie of courtesy and history between a regiment and a college, arms and the gown, is worth recording and probably unique.

No other name of real distinction than Blake's occurs in the registers of 1613 to 1648. But Colonel Henry Ancktill, "the priest and malignant doctor," as he was known among the Roundheads, one of the first Fellows, ought to be remembered, partly on his own account, for he was a vigorous and devoted Royalist, a fighting man when his cause was hopeless; partly because he may have been the original of Dr Rochcliffe in 'Woodstock.' Sir Walter Scott read the 'Athenæ Oxonienses,' and the resemblance between Ancktill and Rochcliffe is striking; but who can say what a great writer finds or creates in fiction or in history!

A perusal of the register shows that in Wadham both of the great parties in Church



ADMIRAL BLAKE.



and State were represented. There were represented also all classes of society, from Dymokes, Herberts, Russells, Portmans, Strangways, to the humblest *plebeiorum filii*, a fact which proves the falsity of the assertion made forty years ago, that Oxford was once a place for "gentlemen only."

The history of the College at this time was not one of unbroken peace: occasional quarrels between members of the governing body are recorded,—evidences of the unrest of a time when greater questions than the interpretation of a Statute or the disputed election of a College officer were already in the air. The only dissension of any interest was one which led to an appeal to the Visitor: the Visitor was Laud, the Bishop of Bath and Wells, who showed great gentleness and patience in dealing with a person even more provoking than he found the worst of Scotch Presbyterians.

We have now reached, "*longas per ambages*," the times of Wilkins' manhood: he was born a year later than the opening of the College which he was to rule.

CHAPTER II.

WILKINS' LIFE TILL HIS APPOINTMENT TO
THE WARDENSHIP.

IN the Common Room of Wadham College hangs the portrait of John Wilkins, Warden from 1648 to 1659. It is probably a faithful likeness, for Wilkins is described by Aubrey as "a lustie, strong-grown, well-set, broad-shouldered person, cheerful and hospitable; no great-read man, but one of much and deepe thinking, and of a working head; and a prudent man as well as ingeniose." In the portrait these characteristics, physical and mental, are well displayed: sanity of mind — that is, clearness, shrewdness, courage, kindness, the contentment which makes the best of good and evil fortune, are,

to the imaginative mind, written in the face, as presented in his picture, of this great man. His greatness fell short of genius, for it was the effect of ordinary qualities, rarely combined and tempered into one character ; but more effective for useful work in the world than genius without sanity.

He was born in 1614 at Fawsley in Northamptonshire. His father was Walter Wilkins, a goldsmith in Oxford, like his son "ingeniose, and of a very mechanickall head, which ran much upon the perpetuall motion," — a problem less hopeful than most, not all, of those which attracted his more practical son, who inherited from him his "insatiable curiosity."

It is from Aubrey that we derive the fullest account of the facts of Wilkins' life, as well as of his character. It is given in one of those "Brief Lives" which might well serve as models to modern biographers ; lives compressed into two pages of nervous English, adorned here and there, rather than disfigured, by quaint pedantic words and phrases, relics of the euphuism of the sixteenth century.

Aubrey is credulous, appallingly frank, a strong partisan, a man of great industry and learning, by no means trustworthy, but none the less entertaining and delightful. He tells us that Wilkins had his "grammar learning from Mr Sylvester, 'the common drudge of the University,' who kept a private school: that he entered Magdalen Hall from New Inn Hall in 1627 at the age of thirteen, and there was placed under the tutorship of 'the learned Mr John Tombs, the Coryphæus of the Anabaptists.'" Tombs was a man of great ability, notable for his "curious, searching, piercing witt, of whom it was predicted that he would doe a great deale of mischief to the Church of England, as great witts have done by introducing new opinions." He was a formidable disputant, so formidable that when he came to Oxford in 1664, and there "sett up a challenge to maintain 'contra omnes gentes' the doctrines of the Anabaptists, not a man would grapple with him, their Coryphæus; yet putting aside his Anabaptisticall opinions he was con-

formable enough to the Church of England"; so much so that he held a living at Leominster, and was the friend of two Bishops, Sanderson and Seth Ward. It is doubtful whether Mr Tombs would now, if he came back, move in Episcopal circles. His career gives us a glimpse into those puzzling times of confusion and cross-purposes, when compromise and toleration co-existed, both in parties and in individuals, with bitter fanaticism, more commonly than is supposed, or can be explained.

It is easy to see what was the influence exercised by Tombs on a clever boy like Wilkins. He was probably trained to be a Latitudinarian; for Tombs, despite his strong opinions, could admire and praise sincerity in opponents: he was heard to say that "though he was much opposite to the Romish religion, truly for his part should he see a poor zealous friar goeing to preach he should pay him respect." Utterances of this kind, if heard by Wilkins, would make a strong impression on a youth by nature singularly tolerant.

Wilkins took his B.A. degree in 1631, his M.A. in 1634. For a few years he took pupils—read to pupils (as the phrase was),—the common resource then, as now, of young Oxonians, who think themselves qualified to teach, and must support themselves till a Fellowship comes, or till they have chosen a profession.

In 1637 he took Holy Orders in the Church of England, and became curate of Fawsley the place in which he had been born. A country living was too small a sphere for a young man of twenty-three, conscious of his powers, ambitious and desirous to see the world of letters, science, and politics in those eventful days. Aubrey tells us that “he has sayd often times that the first rise, or hint of his rising, was from goeing accidentally a courseing of a hare, when an ingeniose gentleman of good quality falling into discourse with him, and finding him to have a very good witt, told him that he would never gett any considerable preferment by continuing in the University, and that his best way was to betake himself

to some lord's or great person's house that had good benefices to conferre. Sayd Mr Wilkins, I am not knowne in the world; I know not to whom to addresse myself upon such a designe. The gentleman replied, 'I will commend you myselfe,' and did so to (as I think) Lord Viscount Say and Seale, where he stayed with very good likeing till the late civill warres."

It is not clear whether this worldly but sound advice was given to Wilkins before or after he became a country clergyman, for the words "continuing in the University" might mean either residence there, or occasional visits to it. Coursing of a hare was, perhaps is, an amusement equally of University men and of the country clergy: the last alone can tell us whether they still "goe a courseing accidentally"—(the word is worth noting)—and whether conversations of this profitable kind occur in the intervals of sport. But the date of the incident is of less importance than its result; it was the turning-point of Wilkins' life.

When he became chaplain to Lord Say and Seale he was introduced into a sphere of politics and action.

William Fiennes, the first Viscount, was a man of light and leading in the Parliamentary party; "the oracle," as Clarendon styles him, "of those who were called Puritans in the worst sense, and steered all their counsels and designs." He deserved his nickname, Old Subtlely, for he had a clear insight into the real issues from the very beginning of the great quarrel: he headed in Oxfordshire the resistance to the levying of Ship-money, and was the champion of the Independents, the most determined of the king's opponents. His sons, John and Nathaniel Fiennes, were no less resolute and effective Puritans than the head of their house; more so indeed, for they were believed, and soon known to be, "for root and branch."

At Broughton, Wilkins, now chaplain and resident there, met the most prominent men of the party which was against the Government. He must have heard "great argument

about it and about"; whether "evermore he came out by the same door wherein he went" we cannot tell, for he possessed to an extraordinary degree the faculty of seeing the two sides of a question: as he stayed at Broughton "with very good likeing" for five or six years, it may be presumed that the discreet and morigerous man concealed the difficulty which he felt in accepting some of the views maintained at Broughton. Some light is thrown on his real opinions by words found in the sermon preached at his funeral by Lloyd, his friend and pupil. "When some thought these dissents ground enough for war, he declared himself against it, and confirmed others in their allegiance: he profest to the last a great hatred of that horrible rebellion." He doubtless resembled another Latitudinarian — Cudworth — whom Burnet describes as "a man of great competence and prudence upon which his enemies did very falsely accuse him of craft and dissimulation."

When the Civil War broke out Wilkins re-

moved to London and became Chaplain to Lord Berkeley, and later to Charles Lewis, Prince Elector Palatine, nephew of Charles I., and elder brother of Prince Rupert. The Elector was then an *émigré* in England, hoping to be restored to his dominions by the aid of his uncle, who was then struggling to hold his own inheritance. During his seven years' residence in London, Wilkins became the friend, perhaps the leader, of the natural philosophers, who later formed themselves into the Royal Society. Thus, before he had reached "the middle of the way of life," he had seen much of the world. Like Ulysses, whom in many ways he resembled, "he saw the cities of many men and knew their mind."

Dr Walter Pope, his half-brother, who wrote a life of Bishop Ward, and, curiously enough, a life also of Claude Duval, the famous highwayman, which had a wider circulation, says of Wilkins that he was "a learned man and a lover of such; of comely aspect and gentlemanlike behaviour. He had been bred in the

court, and was also a piece of a traveller." The last sentence refers mainly to Wilkins' life after the Restoration; but he had travelled before then, and his acquaintance with the Fiennes', with the Elector, and with London society, had taught him "gentlemanlike behaviour" before he became a Head of a House,—a lesson which, apparently, some other Heads in his time had not learnt; for Pope goes on to say, "He had nothing of bigotry, unmannerliness or censoriousness, which then were in the zenith amongst some of the Heads and Fellows of Colleges in Oxford." It is to be hoped that such criticisms would not now be made on the manners of the senior members of the University, and that in this respect Oxford has been reformed, to the approval of all concerned.

While Wilkins was experimenting and philosophising in London, events had been marching rapidly in England and in Oxford. In Wood's 'Life and Times' is written the history of the city of Oxford, of the University and of

himself, from the day of his birth till his death in 1681. The three histories are mingled in a quaint and incoherent fashion. Wood is a chronicler like Aubrey, his friend, with whom he quarrelled, as antiquarians and historians do. Both were industrious, uncritical, and—Wood especially—sometimes venomous; both were vivid and picturesque, keen observers, and had a wonderful power of saying much in few words.

Antony Wood, the son of Thomas Wood, Bachelor of Arts and of Civil Law, was born in 1632 at Oxford, where his father lived, in the Collegiate parish of St John Baptist de Merton. He was educated at New College School, in Oxford, and later at Thame Grammar School; was admitted into Merton College at the age of fifteen as a "*filius generosi*," and became Bible Clerk in 1650. When ten years old he saw the king, with his army of foot, his two sons, Charles and James, his nephews, Rupert and Maurice, enter Oxford after the battle of Edgehill. The incident was impressed

on his memory by the expulsion of his father from the house in Merton Street, and the removal of the boys of New College School to the choristers' chamber at the east end of the College hall, "a dark nasty room, very unfit for such a purpose, which made the scholars often complaine, but in vaine." From this time onward Wood, a clever and observant boy, kept both his ears and eyes open, and accumulated from all quarters materials for his narrative which covers fifty years, the most interesting and important half century in the history of Oxford.

"Your orthodox historian puts
In foremost rank the soldier thus,
The redcoat bully in his boots
That hides the march of men from us."

The "redcoat bully," as Thackeray somewhat harshly calls him, figures largely in the early pages of Wood's 'Life and Times,' but does not hide the march of men. In August 1642, "the members of the University began to put

themselves in a posture of defence," and till June 1646, when Oxford was surrendered to Fairfax, it was a garrison town, the centre and object of much fighting, and of many excursions and alarms, as being "the chiefest hold the King had."

Fain would the writer extract almost bodily Wood's description of the four years' occupation, but some things he cannot forbear from mentioning, for they throw light on the history of Wilkins' Oxford, and on the problems with which he had to deal after the war was ended. Mr Haldane would read with interest and approval how the Oxford undergraduates of 1642 responded to a call to arms, as he hopes their successors will respond, if and when need comes.

"Dr Pink of New College, the deputy Vice-Chancellor, called before him to the public schools all the priviledged men's arms to have a view of them; when, not only priviledged men of the University and their servants, but also many scholars appeared, bringing with them the furniture of armes of every College

that then had any." The furniture for one man was sent by Wood's father—viz., "a helmet, a back and breast plate, a pike, and a musquet." The volunteers, both graduates, some of them divines, and undergraduates, mustered in New College quadrangle, and were drilled in the Newe Parkes (the Parks of our day) to the number of four hundred, "in a very decent arraye, and it was delightsome to behold the forwardnesse of so many proper yonge gentlemen so intent, docile, and pliable to their business." Town and gown took opposite sides: the citizens were, most of them, ready to support the Parliament, or the King and Parliament, but not the King against the Parliament. Long before the Civil War began there were in Oxford and in the kingdom, as always in our history, though called by different names, three parties, divided from each other by no very fast or definite lines; the King's, the Parliament's and the party of moderate men, to which Wilkins belonged; the Constitutional party in the strict meaning

of the word, who wished both to preserve and reform the constitution. In those days of confusion and perplexity, when men's hearts were failing them for fear and for looking after those things which were to come, many knew not what to think or do. It was a miserable time both for Roundheads and Cavaliers, and most of all for those who were not sure what they were. If Hyde and Falkland wavered for a time, how must the timid and lukewarm have wavered? Though the great questions were fairly clear, the way to solve them, and the end to which any way would lead, were dark and gloomy. It is an error to think that the Civil War was a sudden outbreak, a short struggle on simple issues between two sharply divided parties, assured of their beliefs and interests. The French Revolution was that, or nearly that; but our revolutions are managed deliberately, and lead to conclusive and permanent results: the art of revolution belongs to the English race.

In Oxford there must have been much be-

wilderment and questioning among citizens and gownsmen when Lord Say and Seale, the new Lord-Lieutenant of the county appointed by the Parliament, came into the town on September 14, 1642, and ordered that the works and trenches made by the scholars should be demolished; yet next day he "sent a drumme up and downe the towne for volunteers to serve the King and Parliament." What did that mean? Almost any answer might have been given to the question. His lordship's opinions soon became clearer than his puzzling proclamation; on September the 24th he sent for the Heads of Houses to rebuke them for having "broken the peace and quiet of the University," so much broken it that "they had nowe left no face of a Universitie, by taking up armes and the like courses." He had before this interview "caused diverse popish bookes and pictures taken out of churches, and of papish houses, here and abroad, to be burned in the street over against the signe of the Starre, where his Lordship laye." We know

not what is meant by "papish bookes and pictures," but the Puritan Lord Say may not have discriminated sharply between them and the books and ornaments of the High Party in the Church of England.

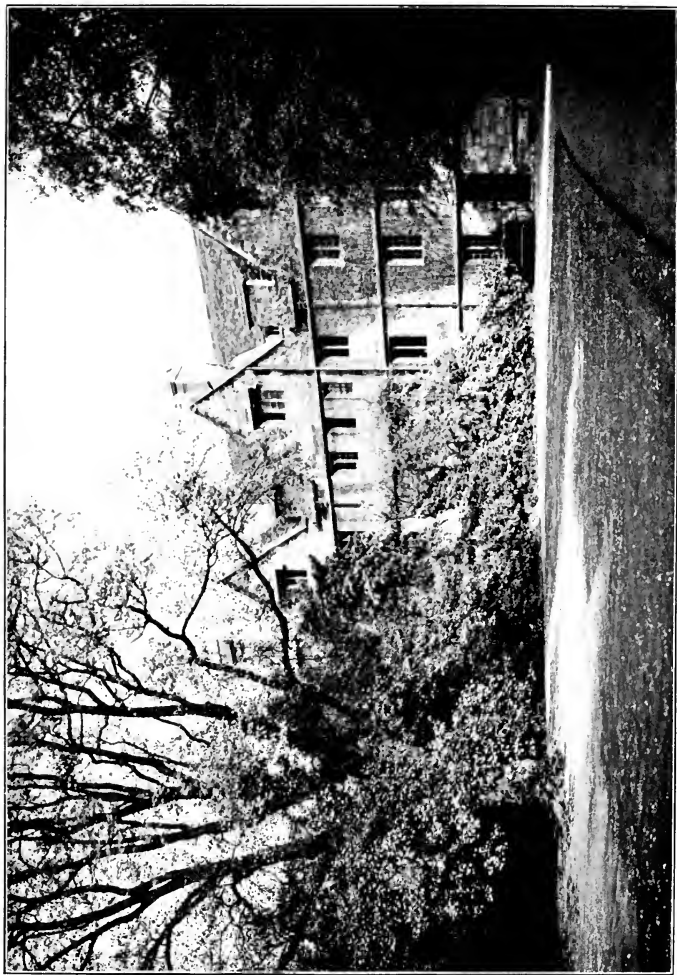
For seven or eight weeks before the battle of Edgehill, Oxford swarmed with soldiers. It had been held for a fortnight by the King's men, who were succeeded by the Parliamentary troopers brought in by Lord Say. Some disturbances took place, in which the soldiers from Puritan London especially distinguished themselves: one of them, when flushed with wine presented by the Mayor "too freely," went so far as to "discharge a brace of bulletts at the stone image of Our Lady over the church St Mairie's parish, and at one shott strooke off her hed, and the hed of her child which she held in her right arme: another discharged his musket at the image of our Saviour over All Soule's gate, and would have defaced all the worke there, had it not been for some townsmen, who entreated them to forbear,

they repliege that they had not been so well treated here at Oxford as they expected: many of them came into Christ Church to viewe the Church and paynted windowes, much admiringe at the idolatry thereof, and a certain Scot, beinge amongst them, saide that he marvaylled how the Schollers could goe for their bukes to these paynted idolatrous wyndoes." From a Scot of that time this utterance was not surprising: bukes had been substituted for paynted wyndowes destroyed in his country many years before his visit to Oxford. But to the honour of the Puritans be it said, there were no serious outrages on person or property in Oxford, and that its citizens had to endure nothing more than fear and discomfort: in no other country in Europe at that time would a city occupied by troops have suffered as little as did Oxford in those two months.

In 'John Inglesant' a man of genius has drawn a picture of Oxford when it was the residence of the King and Queen and Court. His description is so vivid that one is tempted

to believe it to be history: it is that, and not mere fiction, for it is based on a careful study of facts, and, allowance made for the writer's strong Royalist bias, it is true ethically or in spirit, that highest truth which accurate and laborious historians often fail to reach.

John Inglesant entered Wadham before the war began—the date of his admission is obviously uncertain—and lived there from time to time till the rout at Naseby, in 1645, brought about the surrender of Oxford to the Parliament in 1646. It was by a sure instinct that he chose Wadham, that quiet and beautiful college, for his home. He was a dreamer, and in no place could he have dreamt more peacefully and happily than there, though sometimes perhaps, even in his first term, he must have been disturbed by the ominous sounds of axe and hammer, pick and spade, busy on the “fortifications in making about the towne on the north and north-west thereof,” and, later, on the east, toward Headington Hill and close to Wadham. A trace of them remains in the terrace on the east of the Warden's



WADHAM COLLEGE FROM THE WARDEN'S GARDEN.



garden, which did not then exist for Inglesant to walk in, and muse on the problems of the day.

Oxford in his time at Wadham presented a curious spectacle. Huddled together were soldiers, courtiers, ladies beautiful, gay, and famous in many ways, severe Divines and College Heads, to whom such surroundings were unfamiliar and perhaps not uninteresting: masques and revels were frequent; Christ Church meadow and the grove at Trinity were the resort of a brilliant throng, more brilliant even than the gatherings which fill Oxford at Commemoration time in our more sober age. But beneath this merriment there were doubtless in the minds at least of those who thought, or stopped to think, terrible anxieties and the grimmest of forebodings. It was becoming clearer every month that Edgehill had not broken the rebellion; that the struggle would be long, and that the issue was uncertain; events soon justified these fears. On January 10, 1643, "the Kinges letters came to all the Colledges and Halls for

their plates to be brought into the mint at Oxford, there to be coyned into money with promise of refunding it, or payeinge for it again after five shillings the ounce for silver, five and sixpence for silver and gilt." The fruitless sacrifice was made by no college with more unhesitating devotion than by Wadham, which preserves the letter addressed by Charles I. to "our trusty and well-beloved ye Warden and Fellows of Wadham College," and the receipt for 124 lb. of plate from the king's officers of the mint, a liberal contribution from a college only thirty years old. Few relics of the ancient Collegiate plate are now to be found in the University; in most instances pieces, either bestowed or given by special benefactors: the Communion vessels of the Colleges were not taken by the king—a loyal son of the Church. Six colleges, among them Wadham, retained theirs through all the confusion of the war, and still possess them.

In February 1643 warning came of fresh troubles from the north: three Commissioners

representing the nobility, clergy, gentry, and commons of Scotland presented themselves to the king, "to press his Majestie that the Church of England might be made conformable in all points to the Church of Scotland." To Charles, himself a Scot, this request must have seemed an outrageous insult, inflicted on him by those of his own household, and an omen of his desertion by his warlike countrymen, whom, despite their resistance to the English Liturgy, he trusted to be faithful to a Stuart.

On June 24, 1646, the last fighting Royalist left Oxford. In the following Michaelmas, Wood returned "to the home of his nativitie." He found Oxford "empty as to scholars, but pretty well replenished with Parliamentarian soldiers." In his opinion the young men of the city and the University had reaped less benefit from the Royalist occupation than their seniors; the latter had gained "great store of wealth from the court and royalists that had for several years continued among them"; the former he "found many of them to have been debauched

by bearing arms, and doing the duties belonging to soldiers, as watching, warding, and sitting in tipling houses for whole nights together." Nor were the spiritual teachers sent by Parliament to restore good manners and religion, in Wood's opinion, fitted for their mission: they were six Presbyterian Ministers, "two of them fooles, two knaves, two madmen."

With the history of Oxford for the next eighteen months, important and interesting though it is, we are not concerned. The scholars returned slowly to the half-empty colleges, where admissions had dwindled almost to vanishing point. At Wadham, for instance, the admissions in 1643 were only seven; in 1644, three; in 1645, none; in 1646, seven; in 1647, when the worst of the fighting was over, they rose to nineteen. The Independents and the Presbyterians were now in possession of Oxford. In spite of both oppressors the undergraduates, of Wood's College at least, enjoyed themselves, as undergraduates do in the darkest times, and played "high jinks" on Candlemas

Day, compelling the freshmen "to speake some pretty apothegme or make a jest or bull," or take strange oaths "over an old shoe," and suffer indignities if they were shy or stupid. "Naturam expellas furca tamen usque recurrit."

CHAPTER III.

WILKINS' WARDENSHIP.

IN 1647 a Commission, as it would now be called, was appointed by Parliament to conduct the visitation of the University. 'Lord have mercy upon us; or, the Visitation at Oxford,' is the title of one of the numerous pamphlets relating to this Oxford revolution; 'Tragicomœdia Oxonienses' is the title of another, and both suggest curious reflections to Oxonians at the present time. The visitors did their business effectually. They set to work in 1648, and purged the University by ejecting from the colleges all who did not by a certain day give in their assurance that they would submit to the visitors and their visitation appointed by

Parliament. No party in our country can claim the monopoly of loyalty to conviction attested by self-sacrifice. In England, non-jurors and dissenters; in Scotland, Episcopalians, Covenanters, and Free Churchmen; in Ireland, Roman Catholics, have "gone out," or stayed out, for some lost cause. In Oxford, Royalists, from Heads to Servitors, stood by their colours manfully. It is uncertain how many submitted, how many were expelled. The estimates vary from Clarendon's statement that almost all the Heads and Fellows of Colleges were ejected, "scarce one submitting," to Wood's estimate of 334; it is probable that 400—that is, about half of the whole number of Heads, Fellows, and Scholars then resident in the University—"made the great refusal," not to accept office, but to retain it. Antony Wood did not show himself ambitious of martyrdom. On May 12, 1648, he, along with other members of his College, appeared before the Visitors. When asked by one of them, "Will you submit to the authority of Parliament in this visitation?" he wrote on

a paper lying on the table, "I do not understand the business, and therefore I am not able to give a direct answer." "Afterwards his mother and brother, who advised him to submit in plaine terms, were exceedingly angry with him, and told him that he had ruined himself and must therefore go a-begging." Women, then as now, ready to sacrifice themselves, are less ready to permit those dear to them to be over-scrupulous. Wood's mother made intercession for him to Sir Nathaniel Brent, President of the Visitors and Warden of Merton, and "he was connived at and kept in his Postmastership, otherwise he had infallibly gon to the pot."

At Wadham the Visitors met with an obstinate resistance: Dr Pitt, then Warden, was a stout Royalist, and refused to acknowledge the authority of a Parliament acting without the king's consent. He was expelled on April 13, 1648, along with nine of his thirteen Fellows, nine of his fourteen Scholars, and many of his Commoners, all of them save one to return no more.

John Wilkins was put in his place by the Visitors on the same day, and held it till his resignation on September 3, 1659.

Before the end of his stay in London he had taken the covenant and definitely given his allegiance to the Parliamentary party. He was marked out for promotion as a known man of great ability, and he had made many friends among influential persons by his courtesy and tact. It was inevitable that a distinguished Oxford man should be chosen for an important post in the University, which Cromwell desired to convert from a hotbed of Royalism into a nursery of Puritans. Wilkins was qualified by his common-sense and genial ways for what would have been a hopeless task to the clumsy fanatics ready enough to undertake it.

The new Warden must have found himself in a difficult position. There were in Oxford the three parties into which Englishmen and Scotchmen invariably divide themselves. These parties are called by different names at different times, and are formed on different

questions, but remain essentially the same. In Oxford they were called Royalists, Presbyterians, Independents; the questions at issue were the life, discipline, and religion of the University.

This classification has all the faults which a classification can have; it is not exhaustive, for the variations, religious and political, being infinite, cannot be included under three heads; nor do the *membra dividenda* exclude each other: among the Royalists were some members of the established Church, of Calvinistic opinions, who were hardly distinguishable from Presbyterians; and some professed Presbyterians would have stood by Charles had not Laud driven them away, for they had in their nature some of the best elements of conservatism, the historical sense, and a love of order and discipline, especially as administered by themselves. But classifications may be illogical yet useful, and Wilkins would have accepted this one, in his practical way, for working purposes.

The Presbyterians were for forcing on the

Church of England, the Covenant, the Westminster Confession, and the deposition of the Bishop by the Presbyter, or a board of Presbyters. "The Independents conceived that every Christian congregation had, under Christ, supreme jurisdiction in things spiritual; that appeals to provincial and national synods were scarcely less Scriptural than appeals to the Court of Arches or to the Vatican, and that Popery, Prelacy, Presbyterianism, were merely three forms of one great apostacy. In politics the Independents were, to use the phrase of their time, "root and branch men," or, to use the kindred phrase of our own time, radicals: not content with limiting the power of the monarch, they were desirous to erect a commonwealth on the ruins of the old English polity. Macaulay's vigorous words explain the difference between the Presbyterians and the Independents: that difference is explained also by Wood in words as vigorous but less dignified and scholarly. "The Presbyterians," he says, "with their disciples seemed to be very severe in

their course of life, manners or conversation, and habits or apparell ; of a Scotch (*i.e.*, Scotch) habit, but especially those that were preachers. The other (the Independents) were more free, gay, and, with a reserve, frolicsome, of a gay habit, whether preachers or not." John Owen, Dean of Christ Church—to be distinguished from Thankful Owen, President of St John's—seems to have been of a specially gay habit; when Vice-Chancellor "he had alwaies his hair powdred, cambric bands with large costly band strings, velvet jacket, his breeches set round at knee with ribbons pointed, Spanish leather boots with cambric tops, &c.,—all this was in opposition to prelattical cutt." The habit of a Vice-Chancellor, even in full dress, is nowadays far less gay, and of the Presbyterian rather than the Independent fashion. Whatever may have been their difference in dress, both parties were "void of public and generous spirits: the Presbyterians for the most part preached nothing but damnation, the other not, but rather for libertie; yet both

joyne together to pluck downe and silence the prelattical preachers, or at least to expose their way to scorne." Wood carries his comparisons further, and tells, perhaps invents, many things about their common hatred of Maypoles, players, cassocks, surplices, and the use of the Lord's Prayer in public religious service. He more than hints at darker sins,—drunkenness, and immorality cloaked by hypocrisy, the favourite theme of the Restoration dramatists. His account of the Puritan domination in Oxford is, despite his bitter prejudices, historically important, and must have been used by Scott when he wrote 'Woodstock.'

It seems at first sight strange that the Independents should have been "gay," and, even with a reserve, frolicsome, for they were originally the soldiers of Cromwell's "New Model," "honest and religious men." But Wood describes them as he knew them many years after Naseby and Marston Moor, when their character had changed with changing circumstances. Triumphant success seldom im-

proves the morale of any party. Oxford proved a Capua to the Independents who lived in it after the strain of war was over: the very principle of Independency, liberty of opinion and action given to every Christian congregation, came to be applied to the life of the individual: freedom to reject any doctrine or practice which you do not like naturally ends in much gaiety and frolicsomeness, especially if your lines are cast in pleasant places: it becomes difficult not to slide into practical Antinomianism. What a place to live in for eleven years! yet Wilkins did so with success and general applause. He was inclined by temperament to the freedom of mellowed Independency rather than to the stiffness of the Presbyterians, who more successfully than their rivals resisted the enervating influences of life in Oxford. Circumstances as well as inclination led him to become an Independent: his marriage with Cromwell's sister, and the appointment to be one of the Commissioners to execute the office of Chancellor, perhaps also his appointment to the Wardenship, all tended to draw him to

the side of Ireton and the Protector. Of the latter he saw much, and was consulted by him on academical and ecclesiastical affairs.

Lord Morley¹ records "a story told by Bishop Wilkins, who was the husband of Cromwell's youngest sister Robina, that the Protector often said to him that no temporal government could have a sure support without a national church that adhered to it, and that he thought England was capable of no constitution but Episcopacy." Lord Morley thinks that "the second imputation must be apocryphal." That is by no means clear: Cromwell may have said what Wilkins probably did not invent, meaning that he thought Episcopacy good enough for England, for Englishmen were incapable of any better constitution; or he may have modified his judgment of Episcopacy,—who knows all that Cromwell came to think in his latter days, a time when most men revise their opinions? He may have felt the disenchantment which awaits success.

Wilkins' marked success, both in his College

¹ See 'Cromwell,' p. 368, 2nd edition.

and in his University, can be explained only by the fact that he possessed the qualities necessary for the work he had to do,—strong common-sense, moderation, and geniality. He had to live, as the most prominent man, in a society composed of three factions crowded together within the narrow limits of a University town, which even in quiet times is not always the abode of peace. He had to deal with the most burning questions, religious and political, which divide communities: questions which had been stifled for a time by force, and therefore, when force was removed or slackened, came back into vigorous life, and were constantly and bitterly discussed. But he was the man for the time and the place.

His College flourished under his wise and kindly rule. Dr Pope tells us that “many country gentlemen, of all persuasions, but especially those then called Cavaliers and Malignants for adhering to the King and to the Church, sent their sons to his College to be under his government. The affluence of gentlemen was

so great that I may fairly say of Wadham College that it was never before in so flourishing a condition." The "affluence of gentlemen" of all sorts, Fellow Commoners, Commoners, Servitors, and migrants from Cambridge, was, in 1649, fifteen; in 1650, fifty-one; in 1651, twenty-four; in 1652, forty. In the ten complete years of Wilkins' Wardenship the average of admissions was thirty. The large admission made in 1650 was due to the reputation of Wilkins as an able and tolerant College Head, as well as to the belief that the tumult of war had died away. Men's thoughts were turning to civil affairs and the ordinary business of life, especially to education, the preparation for it.

In the registers of the period between 1648 and 1659, are found many names either of distinction in themselves, or of interest as showing that the connection of Wadham with the western counties was well maintained. Walter Pope, who has been already mentioned, was appointed Scholar by the Visitors in 1648,

perhaps on the suggestion of the new Warden, his half-brother. He filled many offices in the College, was one of the original Fellows of the Royal Society, and became Professor of Astronomy in Gresham College. He deserves to be remembered as the author of a quaint and interesting little book, in which he gives a brief account of Wilkins, Lawrence Rooke, and Isaac Barrow, as well as a complete life of Seth Ward, Bishop of Salisbury. It is full of digressions on the manners and customs of the time, written with much humour, and is worthy of a humble place beside the diaries of Evelyn and Pepys.

Seth Ward was a Scholar of Sidney Sussex, ejected from his College and from Cambridge because "he refused the Covenant and other oaths." He went to London, and, like Wren and Wallis, studied mathematics under William Oughtred, the author of the '*Clavis Mathematica*,'—"a little book, but a great one as to the contents,"—which brought its author a great name, as well it might. When in London

Ward met Wilkins and formed a lifelong friendship with him. They were both men of learning, moderate, dexterous, and successful. Ward entered Wadham as a Fellow Commoner in October 1649, became Savilian Professor of Astronomy, and in 1659 President of Trinity. Like Wilkins, he was ejected from his Headship at the Restoration, and like him obtained high preferment under the new *régime* and became a Bishop. Both of them, when in Oxford, "became liable to the persecutions of peevish people who ceased not to clamour, and even to article against them as Cavaliers in their hearts—meer moral men without the Power of Godliness." "You must know," continues Pope, "that a moral and unblamable person, if he did not herd with them, was an abomination to that Party. I have heard one of them deliver himself in this manner." The "manner" is impossible to quote; it is to the effect that the speaker's opponents were hypocrites and Pharisees of the worst kind, and "in a desperate condition, on whom Jesus Christ

can take no hold." The passage is instructive ; it reveals the exasperation of party feeling in those times, and gives much food for reflection.

Christopher Wren belongs both to Wadham and to All Souls. He was admitted Fellow Commoner of Wadham in 1649, and migrated to All Souls in 1653, but maintained his connection with his first College, and for several years occupied the chamber over the gateway. Of him, the close friend of Wilkins, the scientist and architect, the President of the Royal Society, nothing more need here be said. His portrait hangs in Wadham College Hall, beneath that of Robert Blake.

Less known is Thomas Sprat, admitted Scholar of Wadham in 1651. Of him Wood says that he was "an excellent poet and orator, and one who arrived at a great mastery of the English language." His reputation does not rest on his poetry : he was known by the strange and dubious title of "Pindarick Sprat." But his History of the Royal Society justifies Wood's encomium ; and he wrote a

'Relation of the late wicked contrivance of Stephen Blackhead and of Robert Young,' of which Macaulay, who does not praise lightly, says that "there are few better narratives in the language." Sprat became Bishop of Rochester and Chaplain to Charles II., though in his youth he had written an Ode on the death of Oliver Cromwell.

Lawrence Rooke was admitted in 1650 from King's College, Cambridge. He accompanied Ward in his migration to Oxford, "and seated himself in Wadham College for the benefit of his conversation." Pope "never was acquainted with any person who knew more and spoke less." He was a prominent member of the band of philosophers who met in Wilkins' Lodgings; and after the Restoration held the Professorship of Astronomy in Gresham College, and was a Fellow of the Royal Society. Pope's account of him is well worth reading: of his travels in France; of his encounter with the redoubtable Thomas Hobbes, whose quadrature of the circle he proved false: that hard-

headed philosopher's logic or "computation" must have failed him on this occasion, for finding, as he thought, errors in Rooke's criticism, he concluded that his own solution must be true. With Ward and Wallis Hobbes had still more fierce encounters on the same question.

Gilbert Ironside, admitted in 1650, became Warden, Vice-Chancellor of the University, and, as his father had been, Bishop of Bristol, and finally of Hereford. He was the "rudest man in the University," and that without respect of persons, for he remonstrated, in a tone not far removed from rudeness, with James II. when he visited Oxford in 1687 to enforce his mandate on Magdalen College.

William Lloyd, who entered Wadham in 1655, was a learned Divine, with his learning at command, of whom Burnet says that "he had the most learning in ready cash of any one he knew." He devoted himself to the interpretation of prophecy. His labours were rewarded by the title of *Pseudopropheta Canus*, bestowed on him when he was old and white-

haired, by the *terræ filius* of 1703. He had himself in his younger days shown some tendency to irreverent joking, by inventing an Eastern Patriarch, a native of London, a man of venerable appearance and dressed to suit the character, who deceived some eminent members of the University, and gave them his blessing; an incident of which Lloyd used to make his "bragge" long afterwards. He became Bishop of St Asaph, and was one of the Seven Bishops committed to the Tower. William III. rewarded him with the Bishoprics of Lichfield and Coventry, and finally of Worcester.

Samuel Parker matriculated in 1657, and became Bishop of Oxford in 1686. In the following year he was intruded by James II. into the President's place at Magdalen College, but held his office for only five months. He died in his Lodgings, and was buried in the ante-chapel, but honoured by no memorial to mark the place of his interment. His must have been a dismal reign.

Beside these names of bishops and philosophers occur names of interest of various kinds: historic names—Russell, Lovelace, Windham, Strangways; one also of quite different associations, Sedley, who entered Wadham in 1656, the boon companion later of Rochester, who, also a Wadham undergraduate, was his junior by four years. Both of them were libertines and wits, who received at their College, it may be presumed, an education the precepts of which they did not practise at the Court of Charles II. Other entries show the continued connection of the College with the West of England—with Somerset, the Wadhams' county; with Devon, Dorset, Hampshire, and Gloucestershire.

Enough has been said to prove that Wadham under Wilkins was a college of high reputation and efficiency. It was a nursery of bishops, contributing to the bench no less than six, including Wilkins himself; a nursery also of Fellows of the Royal Society,—Wilkins, Ward, Rooke, Wren, Sprat, and Pope were original

members of the "invisible college." Not only to the Church and to Science did Wadham do good service, but more directly to the State, by educating together impartially the youth of both the great parties. "When the hurly-burly's done, when the battle's lost and won," it is above all things desirable to allay bitter feelings, and bring the former combatants together. For this most difficult and delicate of tasks Wilkins was well qualified. He was beloved by the Cavaliers because he treated all his undergraduates kindly, Royalists and Puritans alike, in marked contrast with other Heads of Houses, who appear to have dealt faithfully with young Malignants, the sons of their political opponents.

That Wilkins possessed great administrative abilities and vigour is shown by his work in the University and in his College. He had seen much of the world, and was in the prime of life, and already a man of eminence—a combination of qualities as rare in Heads of Houses as in Cabinet Ministers. He persuaded the Visitors

that Wadham and Trinity were fitted, specially and immediately, in 1651 for freedom to elect their Fellows—a privilege of which all the Colleges had been deprived in 1648. The administration of the College estates and finances was carefully revised, and the Statutes were amended. Wilkins' life was varied and full of activities outside as well as within his College. He was selected to deal with problems more difficult and pressing than Compulsory Pass Greek, or degrees for women. Was Oxford to be dismantled? Its security had been threatened by a rising of the "Levellers"; and in 1649 Wilkins, along with the Proctor and a Canon of Christ Church, was appointed to confer with the mayor and the citizens on this important question, not then decided.

Two years later he served on a Commission appointed to consider how to suppress troubles caused by sturdy beggars, "poore soldiers, cashiered or maimed, and Irish people with petitions, that pretended to be undone by the late rebellion there,"—the miserable sequel of

the civil war. He helped in the revision of the College and University Statutes, and on the nomination of Cromwell was made one of the Commissioners for executing the office of Chancellor, proving himself a man of affairs as well as of learning. For ten years, as critical as any in the history of Oxford, he took a leading part in its academical and municipal administration.

Yet he found time to avail himself of the privilege to marry given to the Warden of Wadham: it was accorded to him by a dispensation of the Visitors, who doubtless thought that enforced celibacy savoured of Popery. The privilege was withdrawn after the Restoration, as being a concession made by Puritans, whose views on the marriage of the clergy were not the views of the High Church party. Leave to marry was given to all Wardens of Wadham by a special Act of Parliament in 1806, and not, as the College story goes, by a clause tacked on to a Canal or Turnpike Bill.

Pope's account of Wilkins' marriage is a

strange solution of an always interesting question, and not altogether complimentary to the lady of his choice. "Dr Ward," he says, "rid out of this storm,"—the storm of obloquy which broke out on him and Wilkins as being "mere moral men." Wilkins "put into the port of matrimony," apparently as a harbour of refuge in distress. He married Robina, the Protector's sister, widow of Dr Peter French, Canon of Christ Church. Her first husband was "a pious, humble, and learned person, and an excellent preacher," the best, in Pope's opinion, of the censorious party. Ward did not imitate his friend, though, if we believe Pope, he had many opportunities for doing so. "He was never destitute of friends of the Fair Sex, never without proffers of Wives," which became increasingly frequent as he rose in the world. Pope professes to have known "several persons of great quality and estates who found ways to make it known to Ward, that if he would address himself to them in the honourable way of marriage, he should not want a kind entertain-

ment." But he, then Bishop of Salisbury, had before his eyes the fate of one of his predecessors who married after he became a bishop, and "upon that had received so severe a reprimand from his brother, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and laid it so much to heart that it accelerated his death." This story may be apocryphal; it is certainly startling. Do ladies of quality still give such hints to bishops? Do bishops die of a rebuke from the archbishop of their province?

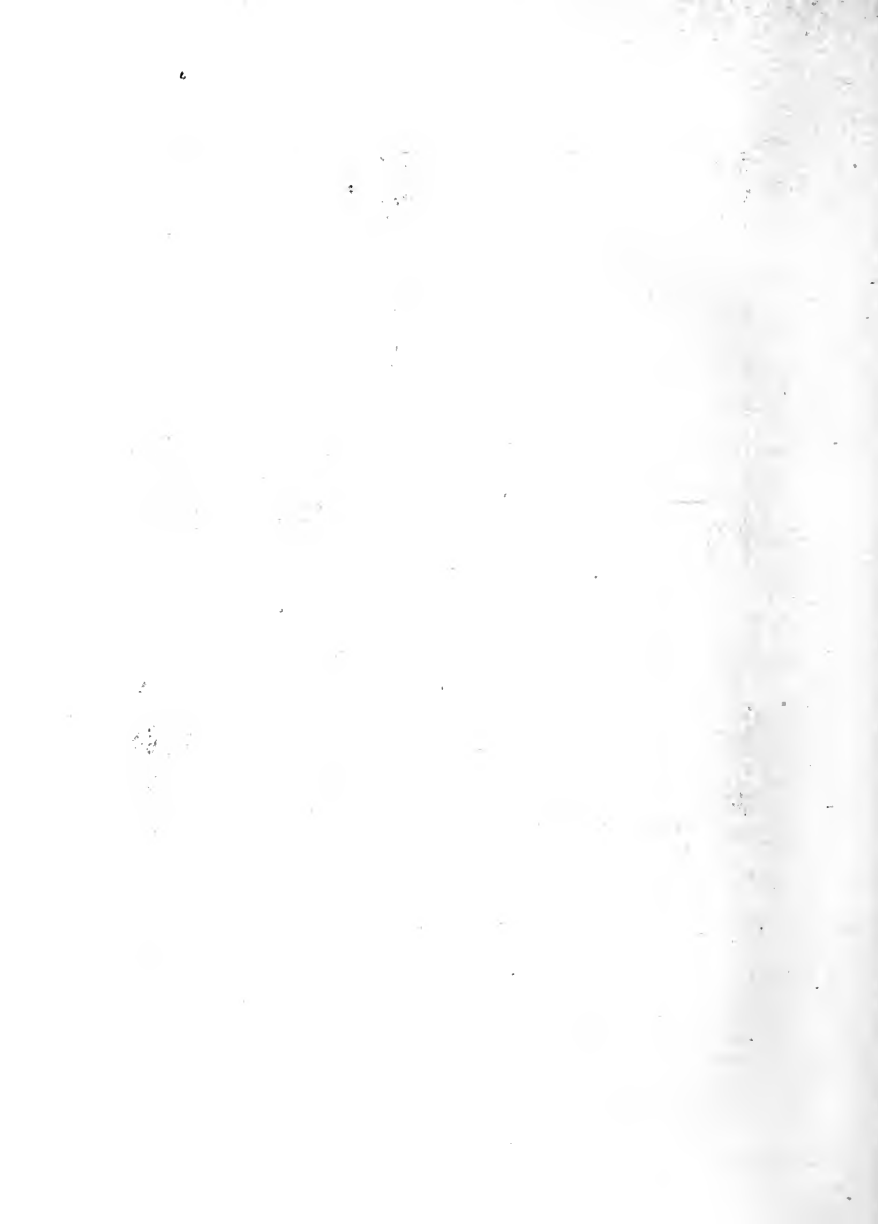
Wilkins' marriage "gained him a strong interest and authority in the University, and set him at safety, and out of the reach of his Adversaries." We may trust that it was for his happiness in other ways.

Of his wife little is known, nor is there a portrait of her in the College. She had a son by her second marriage, Joshua Wilkins, who became Dean of Down: by her first marriage she had a daughter, Elizabeth French, the wife of Tillotson. The writer once amused himself with the fancy that the Archbishop to-be met

and courted Miss French in the Warden's Lodgings at Wadham, which have few romantic associations; but chronology proves that Tillotson, a Cambridge man, born in 1630, would probably not have made acquaintance with Wilkins before 1659, when he became Master of Trinity. The romance had therefore to be transferred to the Master's Lodge. Even there it could not stay, for Tillotson's first meeting with his future wife in all likelihood took place in London, when he was appointed Tuesday Lecturer at St Lawrence Jewry, the vicarage of which was one of Wilkins' earliest preferments after his ejection from the Mastership of Trinity. When Tillotson made suit for the hand of his stepdaughter, Wilkins, upon her desiring to be excused, said, "Betty, you shall have him, for he is the best polemical Divine this day in England." Though excellence in polemical divinity has not an attraction for most women, she consented, and they were married in 1664. The stories both of Dorothy and Betty are myths, which fade away at the first touch of criticism.



WADHAM COLLEGE FROM THE COLLEGE GARDEN.



Wilkins was a diligent student, and wrote books of many kinds. These books the writer does not pretend to have read, save in the most hurried, even careless way, except two of them, the 'Real Character' and 'Natural Religion.' The others are of interest to natural philosophers, as containing anticipations of discoveries and ideas which belong to a later age, and as showing that Wilkins possessed the inspiring conviction of all genuine men of Science, that for it the word impossible does not exist.

In 1638 he published his first work, an Astronomical treatise, the fruit of his studies at Oxford and at Fawsley. It is entitled 'The Discovery of a World in the Moone, or a discourse tending to prove that there may be another habitable World in that Planet': in the third impression, issued in 1640, is added a "Discourse concerning the Possibility of a Passage thither." Like Lucian he imagined a voyage to the moon, though he admits that the journey through the air was a formidable difficulty. He successfully de-

fended his views against an objection raised by the Duchess of Newcastle. That clever and eccentric lady, the authoress of many "fancies," philosophical and poetical, asked him where she was to bait her horses if she undertook the journey. "Your Grace could not do better," he replied, "than stop at one of your castles in the air." In his treatment of the difficulties caused by the apparent conflict between certain passages of Scripture and the conclusions of Astronomical Science, which he accepts, he anticipates in a remarkable way that explanation of them which rests on the understanding of the meaning of the Bible and of the nature of inspiration. The book was parodied in the story of 'Peter Wilkins' Journey to the Moon,' which even usually well-informed persons have been known to attribute as a *jeu-d'esprit* to the Warden of Wadham. It was written by Robert Paltock, and published in 1751.

His next production was 'Mercurie; or the Secret and Swift Messenger,'—a treatise on Cryptography or ciphers; curious contrivances

whereby A can communicate with C without B's suspecting or understanding, by signs, gestures, parables, and transpositions of the alphabet: such as the writer looked at seemed to confirm the view that every cipher which depends on system, and not on an arrangement of a capricious kind, can be interpreted by an expert, a title to which he lays no claim. The book was meant perhaps for use in the Civil War, as was the system of Wilkins' friend, Dr Wallis, who could both invent and solve such puzzles, and distinguished himself by deciphering the letters of the king which fell into the hands of the Parliamentarians at Naseby. There is also among the "Tracts of Bishop Wilkins," a treatise dated 1648, entitled 'Mathematical Magic; or, the Wonders worked by Mechanical Powers and Motions,' subdivided, according to that distinction, into two books, styled Archimedes and Dædalus. The names are quaint, and the classical illustrations are very numerous. The work is a kind of handbook for engineers, enlivened by quotations,

not always apposite, from ancient authors, as was the fashion when high literary culture and science could be more easily combined than in our days of ruthless specialism. It is dedicated in very courtly language to the Prince Elector Palatine. Wilkins looks forward to the Prince's restoration to his dominions—a curious aspiration to be professed by a man who did not, then at least, put his trust in princes. But he did not foresee what was to come, both to himself or others.

His two books of a devotional character were, one on 'The Gift of Prayer,' a formal and elaborate treatise with many divisions and subdivisions, in spirit earnest and devout. Its companion treatise, 'Ecclesiastes; or the Gift of Preaching,' shows a high conception of the learning which he thought necessary for one who would preach well; knowledge of commentators; of preachers, especially of English sermon-writers; of works on Christian doctrine, on the history of Christianity; of all subjects which can be included in Theology. The list of

books recommended is enormous, and beyond the reach of any man—even of Wilkins or Casaubon : it must have been intended to be a work of reference, a catalogue from which a student might select. It, like his ‘*Sermons Preached on Several Occasions*,’ is illumined by quaint utterances, humorous, sensible, and devout ; qualities more frequently combined in those days than in our own, when the “dignity of the pulpit,” a lamentable superstition, has weakened its influence, and has made religion appear to simple people remote from common life.

Wilkins’ most original and valuable contribution to Theology is ‘*The Principles and Duties of Natural Religion*,’ written in his later years, and published after his death by Tillotson. Mr Sanders, the writer of the too short article on Wilkins in the ‘*Dictionary of National Biography*,’ says that “in this work there are thoughts which anticipate the argument of Butler’s ‘*Analogy*.’” Wilkins, like Butler and Newman, draws distinctions between different kinds of evidence and different degrees of con-

sequent assent. He points out that neither Natural Religion nor Christianity can be proved true by demonstration like a conclusion in geometry, or in any kind of mathematical reasoning; that in default of this inference from self-evident premises to propositions of equal cogency, we must, in a matter of paramount practical importance, be content to judge, as fairly and soberly as we can, by that "probability" which Butler calls "the guide of life." Wilkins perceived, what few in his time perceived, that there are no "demonstrations" of Christianity, nor even of Theism; that faith is faith. Further, he emphasises the harmony between Natural and Revealed Religion, the fact that one is the complement of the other. But in him there are not the depth, candour, and seriousness of Butler, nor that sense of mystery which makes him the weightiest of Christian Apologists in the estimation both of disciples and opponents.

The book by which Wilkins will always be remembered among curious students and phil-

ologers is his 'Essay towards a Real Character and a Philosophical Language.' It is a quarto of 600 pages, including an alphabetical dictionary of English words, with their equivalents in what may be called, without irreverence, Wilkinese. It was written at the request of the Royal Society, and, by its order, published in 1688. The meaning of the somewhat obscure title is explained by Wilkins in a very interesting preface. Character means language, or rather writing, and a universal character is the script of a language like that which was spoken before the confusion of tongues; a language for and of all men. By "Real" is signified that the new language is founded on a study of things which are "better than words"; of "the nature of things, and that common notion of them wherein mankind does agree." The making of such a language "will prove the shortest and plainest way for the attainment of real knowledge," and the language thus made will be truly philosophical, or, to use our modern term, scientific. The

labour bestowed by Wilkins on his magnificent project was immense, but the result was failure. "Sunt lacrimæ rerum," and tears were never shed over a greater waste of ingenuity and heroic toil, if indeed a fine example of fruitless devotion is to be called waste. With apologies to the Esperantists, it must be said that the invention of a universal language, of any but the narrowest compass, seems impossible, for language, in any real sense, is not made but grows. It is dangerous, however, to dogmatise on possibilities. Misled, as we can gather from his preface, by the proved usefulness of mathematical signs, Wilkins attempted to provide for philosophers of all countries a better means of communication than Latin, then the universal language of literature and science, but in his opinion unscientific, full of anomalies and difficult to acquire; for in it there were, he said, thirty thousand words. In his language there were only three thousand, and they could be learnt by a man of good capacity in a month. His estimate of capacity and diligence is somewhat

high. It is possible to explain the principles on which he constructed his new tongue. He began by dividing the universe, the sum total of existence, things, thoughts, relations, after the manner of Aristotle, though not into ten, but into forty categories, or genera, or great classes, such as World, Element, Animal, and apparently species of animals, such as Bird, Fish, Beast: for each of these great classes he devised a monosyllabic name—*e.g.*, De for Element, Za for Fish; each of these genera is subdivided into species indicated by the addition of a consonant, and these are again subdivided into subordinate species distinguished by a vowel affixed. For example—De means an Element, any of the four, Fire, Air, Earth, Water; add to it B, which, as the first consonant, stands for the first species of a genus, and you will have the significant word DEB, which means Fire, for it, we know not why, is the first of the four Elements. Let us take a more complex instance—his name for Salmon. The salmon is a species of Za or Fish,

a particular kind of fish called N, namely, the Squameous river fish. This class ZaN is subdivided into lower classes, and the lower class Salmon is called A, which means the red-fleshed kind of squameous river fish, and so a salmon is a ZaNA. If you wished to state the fact that a salmon swims, you would use the words ZaNA GoF, for Go stands for the great category of motion, F for the particular kind of motion meant, swimming. Voice, tense, and mood are indicated by lines of different lengths, straight or curved, crossed, hooked, looped; adverbs and conjunctions by dots or points differently arranged.

Wilkins' universal character therefore means a kind of shorthand writing of his Real Language.

The writer fears that he may only have confused his readers and himself by his bold but poor attempt to express in a few lines the meaning of six hundred pages. He would be the last to ridicule the "folly" of a great man, whose system he has made no very labor-

ious effort to understand, for it seems to be built on sand, on a classification of things superficial, imperfect, and capricious, which would not have been accepted by learned men, and if accepted would have become obsolete in a quarter of a century. The syllable *Co* stands for all relations between human beings, and these relations are of eight kinds. What would a professor of social science now say to this? What would an ichthyologist say to Wilkins' definition of a salmon? The interest of the book lies in its being the most striking of many proofs of the wide intellectual interests, the alert and insatiable curiosity, and the extraordinary industry of its writer. It has also the pathetic interest of "love's labour lost," for who now reads the 'Real Character,' or who read it twenty years after Wilkins' death? His name was "writ in water," for he spent himself on many things, and did little because he did too much.

The "greatest curioso" of his time relieved his toils by music. Nowhere are Wood's vanity

and self-consciousness shown more vividly than in his account of a musical entertainment given by Wilkins in honour of Thomas Baltzar, "the most famous artist for the violin which the world had yet produced. The books and instruments were carried thither," to the Warden's lodgings, "but none could be persuaded there to play against him in consort on the violin. At length the company, perceiving A. W. standing behind in a corner neare the dore, they haled him in among them, and play forsooth he must against him: whereupon, he being not able to avoid it, took up a violin, and behaved himself as poor Troylus did against Achilles." Wood consoled himself for his failure by the honour he acquired from being asked to play with the Master, of whom he maliciously remarks that "he was given to excessive drinking,"—a characteristic comment.

Wilkins' greatest achievement was the founding of the Royal Society. He may be called its founder, if that high title can be given to any one of the eminent men who, in Oxford and

in London, revived or regenerated the study of natural philosophy. Pope, Aubrey, and Sprat differ from Wallis in their accounts of the origin of the mother of scientific parliaments. The first three find that origin in meetings held in Wadham College under the presidency of Wilkins. Wallis traces the beginnings of the Royal Society to meetings held in London in 1645. "In that year," he writes, "there had sprung up an association of certain worthy persons inquisitive in Natural Philosophy, who met together, first in London, for the investigation of what was called the new or experimental philosophy, and afterwards several of the more influential of the members, about 1648 or 1649, finding London too much distracted by civil commotions, commenced holding their meetings in Oxford." Among those who removed to Oxford were, "first, Dr Wilkins, then I, and soon after Dr Goddard, whereupon our company divided. Those at London (and we when we had occasion to be there) met as before. Those of us at Oxford, with Dr Ward, Dr Petty, and

many others of the most inquisitive persons in Oxford, met weekly for some years at Dr Petty's lodgings, on the like account, to wit, so long as Dr Petty continued in Oxford, and for some while after, because of the conveniences we had there (being the house of an apothecary) to view and make use of drugs, and other like matters as there was occasion. We did afterwards (Dr Petty being gone to Ireland and our numbers growing less) remove thence, and (some years before his Majesty's return) did meet at Dr Wilkin's lodgings in Wadham College."

This account is plain enough: it differs from the story told by Sprat in this point only, that Sprat omits reference to the first meetings in London between 1645 and 1648, and to the meetings in Oxford at Dr Petty's lodgings. The causes of these omissions are not far to seek. Sprat was a youth of seventeen in 1651, the year of his admission into Wadham: it is difficult to believe that he was present at the gatherings of men many years his senior

in Dr Petty's lodgings, or knew as much as Wallis did of the infancy of the Royal Society. No Oxford man is to be entirely trusted when writing about his own College, and Sprat laudably claimed for Wadham the honour of being the cradle of the great association.

In his history of the Royal Society, published in 1667, he gives a full account of its growth and objects, though not of its beginnings.

"It was some space," he writes, "after the end of the Civil Wars at Oxford, in Dr Wilkins, his lodgings, in Wadham College, which was then the place of resort for virtuous and learned men, that the first meetings were held which laid the foundation of all this that followed. The University had at this time many members of its own who had begun a free way of reasoning; and was also frequented by some gentlemen of philosophical minds, whom the misfortunes of the kingdom, and the security and ease of a retirement among Gownsmen had drawn thither. Their first purpose was no more than only the satisfaction

of breathing a freer air, and of conversing in quiet one with another, without being engaged in the passions and madness of that dismal Age. And from the Institution of that Assembly, it had been enough if no other advantage had come but this: that by this means there was a race of young men provided, against the next Age, whose minds, receiving from them their first impressions of sober and general knowledge, were invincibly armed against the enchantments of Enthusiasm. But what is more, I may venture to affirm that it was in good measure by the influence which these Gentlemen had over the rest, that the University itself, or at least any part of its Discipline or Order was saved from ruine. For such a candid and impassionate company as that was, and for such a gloomy season, what could have been a fitter subject to pitch upon than Natural Philosophy? To have been always tossing about some Theological question would have been to have made that their private diversion the excess of which they themselves

disliked in the public. To have been eternally musing on Civil business and distresses of their Country was too melancholy a reflection. It was Nature alone which could pleasantly entertain them in that estate."

It would be superfluous to praise this noble and pathetic passage. It shows the weariness of political and religious controversy which oppressed men's minds; the discouragement, almost hopelessness, which made the Restoration welcome, and Puritanism odious, for a time at least, to the majority of Englishmen. The word *Enthusiasm* is of strange significance; then and for more than a hundred years later it connoted extravagance and fanaticism. Worthy of notice also are Sprat's words to the effect that the influence of Wilkins and his friends was on the side of discipline and order in the University, and saved it from "ruine." They ought to please and encourage, perhaps instruct, the modern apostles of science who are with us now.

From a comparison of Wallis' and Sprat's

accounts, it is clear that the dispute, if dispute there be, whether Wadham or London was the cradle of the Royal Society, can be settled more easily than most contested claims of this kind. The facts are ascertained: the question turns on the meaning of the words "founder" and "foundation." The first meetings of the Philosophical Club, which became the Royal Society, were unquestionably held in London, and were continued there, at the Bull's Head Tavern in Cheapside, after Wilkins had removed to Oxford in 1648, and gathered round him there the members of a new philosophical society, which may be called, if that name be preferred, an offshoot from the parent stem: the two clubs co-existed till the Restoration, when most of the Oxford philosophers migrated or returned to London, and were incorporated into one society which received its name and charter from Charles II. in July 1662.

Metaphors do not always illustrate, but the facts may be stated thus: the Royal Society was born in London or cradled there; the infant did

not thrive, and was put out to nurse at Oxford where it waxed and prospered : it was a proper child of three years old when (on Petty's leaving Oxford in 1651) it found a settled home in the Warden's lodgings in Wadham for eight years ; grown and strengthened, the boy was brought back to his birthplace, and was recognised and named. In this sense it may be said that the Royal Society was founded by Wilkins in Wadham : that College was its early home, and Wilkins was the most prominent and active man in the Philosophical Club.

A very clear and short account of many of its members is given in the ' History of the Oxford Museum,' by Dr Vernon and Miss Vernon, which, if I may presume to praise it, resembles the work of Oughtred before mentioned, as being "a little book, but a great one as to the contents." Sprat enumerates as "the principal and most constant of those who met at Wadham, Dr Seth Ward, Mr Boyle, Dr Wilkins, Sir William Petty, Dr Wallis, Dr Goddard, Dr Willis, Dr Bathurst, Mr Matthew Wren, Dr Christopher Wren, Mr

Rooke, besides several others, who joyn'd themselves to them, upon occasion." The list is remarkable; it represents the science of the time, —Mathematics, Astronomy, Chemistry, Physics, Engineering, Architecture, Theology, and Political Economy or Arithmetic, for nothing "scibile" was alien to these inquisitive persons. "Their proceedings," we are told, "were rather by action than discourse, chiefly attending some particular Trials in Chymistry or Mechanicks: they had no Rules nor Method fixed: their intention was more to communicate to each other their discoveries which they could make in so narrow a compass, than an united, constant, or regular inquisition." They were probably "clubbable" persons, friends with a common interest, each pursuing his own path with perfect freedom, a method which must have enhanced the harmony and efficiency of their meetings. The Club, or a branch of it, survived at Oxford the departure of Wilkins and most of the philosophers. To Robert Boyle was mainly due the continuance of the faithful remnant. In the year

1659 he imported into Oxford Peter Sthael, a noted Chemist and Rosicrucian, "a great hater of women and a very useful man." Among those who attended his lectures were Antony Wood, Wallis, Wren, Bathurst, and, not least, Locke, who was troublesome, and "scorned to take notes"—why we are not told, and may imagine as we please. Wood's account of this survival is obscure—he seems uncertain as to the relation of Sthael's pupils to the Royal Society at Oxford: they were probably the same, and incurred the wrath and misrepresentations of Henry Stubb, who inveighed against them as dangerous,—the Society had become obnoxious to the University, being suspected of a desire to confer degrees, against which the University "stuck," to use Wood's word, not unreasonably.

The Oxford meetings in Wilkins' time, after 1651, were held, not in the room over the gateway, but in the dining-room or drawing-room of the Warden's lodgings. By the direction of the Foundress "the chamber over the great gate" had been assigned to the Warden, as command-

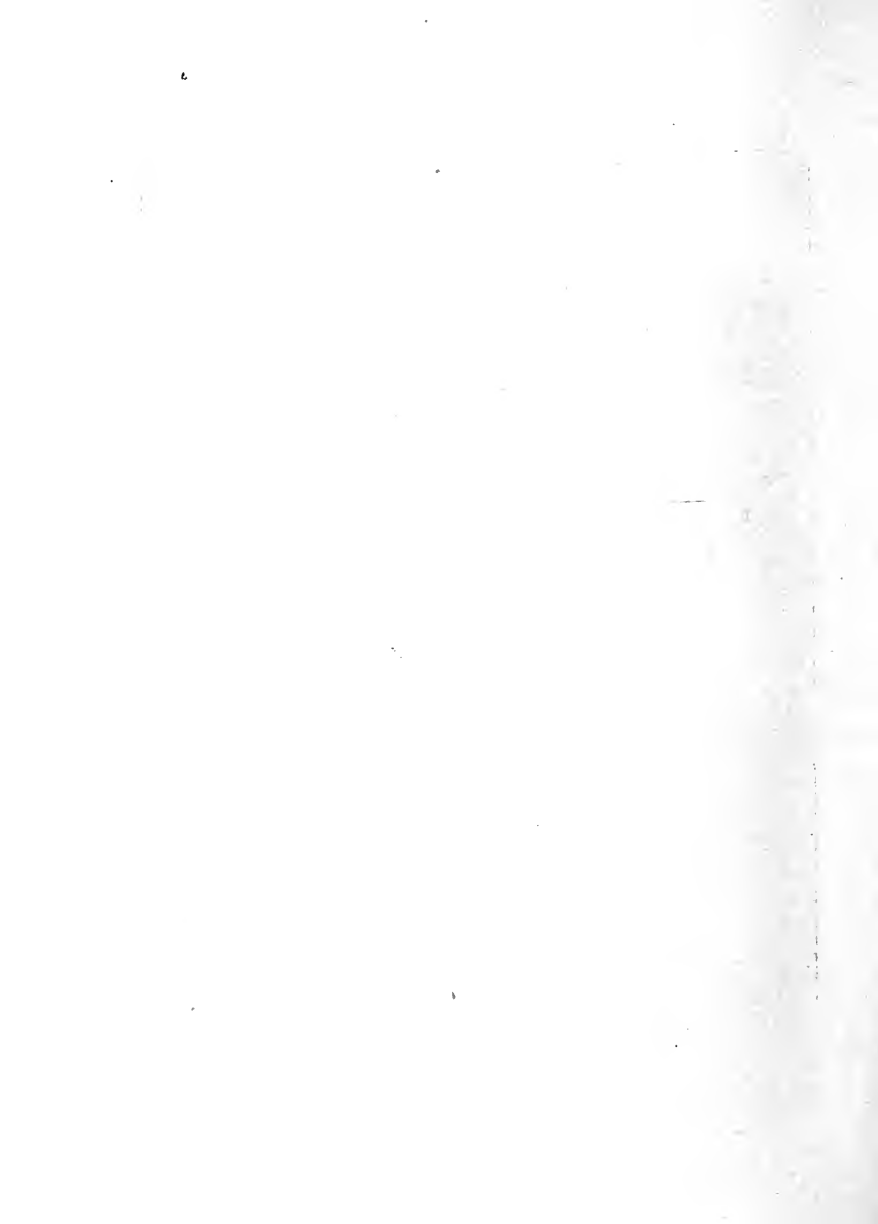
ing the entrance into the College, and a view of all who should go in or out : he was to have also for his own use seven rooms next adjoining on the north side. It is uncertain at what date he migrated to his present lodgings, but there is abundant evidence to show that it was before the time of Wilkins, for from 1640 to 1663 the great chamber was occupied by various tenants,—among them Seth Ward and Christopher Wren. The writer is therefore warranted in picturing to the eye of his imagination the personages of the club assembled in his drawing-room, a club less famous, but no less worthy of fame, than the Literary Club of Johnson, Goldsmith, Burke, and Reynolds.

Fain would he ask questions of Wren or Ward or Wilkins, or any of the members of the club, most of whom he would recognise by their portraits in the College or elsewhere.

On September 3, 1658, Oliver Cromwell died. To Wood the exact date is important, because “some writers tell us that he was



SIR CHRISTOPHER WREN.



hurried away by the Devill in a terrible raging wind on the 30th of August," a statement which the chronicler might have been expected to believe. Richard Cromwell was proclaimed Protector at Oxford on September 6th, in the usual places where kings had been proclaimed. The ceremony was disturbed by young scholars, who pelted with carrots and turnips the mayor, recorder, and town clerk, as well as Colonel Upton and his troopers. These missiles were symptoms of the reaction which was fast approaching. It belongs to the history of England, but so far as it showed itself in Oxford, it is part of the life of Wilkins. It must have given him much to think of during the last year of his Wardenship. In February 1659 the Vice-Chancellor wrote to the Dean of Christ Church, then in London, that "he must make haste to Oxford, for godliness laye a gasping." Nathaniel Crewe of Lincoln had in the same month drawn up a petition, which Wood signed, to put out the Visitors. He was a Presbyterian, and ready to have the Visitors

“put downe, notwithstanding he had before submitted to them and had paid to them reverence and obedience. The Independants, who called themselves the godly party, drew up a petition contrary to the former, and said ’twas for the cause of Christ.” The feud between the two parties was no less bitter, when their supremacy in Oxford was drawing to its end, than it had been many years before. Which of the petitions did Wilkins sign?

A year later, in February 1660, Monk made a speech to Parliament of doubtful meaning, exhorting his hearers to be careful “that neither the Cavalier nor the phanatique party have yet a share in your civil or military power,”—on which utterance Wood notes that “the word phanatique comes much into fashion after this.” Monk’s meaning was quickly interpreted for him, both in London and in Oxford,—on February 13th “there was great rejoicing here at Oxon for the news of a free parliament, ringing of bells, bonfires, &c.: there were rumps (*i.e.*, tayles of sheep) flung in a bonfire at Queen’s

Coll., and some at Dr Palmer's window at All Soles." The joy of the Royalists especially was manifested by the reading at Magdalen parish church of Common Prayer, "after it had been omitted to be read in public places in Oxon since the surrender of the city or in 1647." All the tokens of Monarchy were restored: "the signe of the King's Head had been dashed out, or daubed over, tempore Olivari, and (in its place was written 'This was the King's Head') was new painted." On the 1st of May "a Maypole was set up against the Beare in All Hallows parish (*i.e.*, opposite the Mitre of our time) on purpose to vex the Presbyterians and Independants," despite the interference of Dr Conant, the Vice-Chancellor. On the 10th the new King was proclaimed: on the 14th letters from Richard Cromwell to Convocation were read, whereby he resigned the Chancellorship of the University in dignified and courteous words. By May 29th the Restoration was complete, and the day was observed in all or in most towns in England,

“particularly at Oxon, which did exceed any place of its bigness.” Wood’s comment on these events is worth giving in full: “The world of England was perfectly mad. They were free from the chains of darkness and confusion which the Presbyterians and phanatiques had brought upon them: yet some of them, seeing then what mischief they had done, tack’d about to participate of the universal Joy, and at length closed with the Royal partie.” Here we take leave, for a time, of Antony Wood, who has been allowed to tell his story in his own words; unwilling leave, for though he is provoking, he is charming, with a keen eye for character, both of parties and individuals, and for the issues and events of real importance, never dull or lengthy, save when he descants on his family affairs or on the minutiae of his occasionally meticulous antiquarianism, and even then to be forgiven for his zeal and industry.

CHAPTER IV.

WILKINS AFTER HIS LIFE AT OXFORD.

WILKINS was spared the pain of witnessing the end of the Commonwealth in Oxford, and of being ejected from his post like other Heads of Houses. On September 3, 1659, he resigned the Wardenship, and was succeeded on September 5th by Walter Blandford, one of the Fellows who had submitted to the Visitors in 1648, and later, in that strange time of opinions which "could be changed," had made his peace with the Royalists. During his Wardenship of six years the College flourished. He was made Bishop of Oxford in 1665, and was in 1671 promoted to the See of Worcester, another of the many Wadham Bishops.

Wilkins left Wadham to become Master of Trinity College, Cambridge. He had been invited there by the Fellows, on whose petition he was presented by Richard Cromwell. Thirty years later Cambridge, as if in exchange for value received, sent Richard Bentley to Wadham, who left it to return to Cambridge as Master of Trinity,—an interchange of which neither University can complain.

At Cambridge Wilkins' stay was brief. He was Master of Trinity only for ten months, but in that short reign he proved himself as vigorous and effective as he had been at Wadham: he stimulated and organised the College teaching, and made his Fellows work, by instituting disputations, and examinations at elections, probably fallen out of use in the troubles of the fifteen previous years; yet here as elsewhere he was able to win and rule, for "he was honoured there and heartily loved by all." At Cambridge, Burnet tells us, "he joined with those who studied to propagate better thoughts, to take men off from being in parties, or from

narrow notions, from superstitious conceits, and fierceness about opinions." He must have had as his allies there Cudworth and Whichcote, men of his own age, and one younger, Stillingfleet, the Latitudinarians, from whom our Broad Churchmen are theologically descended.

The evil days came soon : despite the petition of the Fellows who wished to keep him, he was ejected from the Mastership when the King came back. "The whirligig of time brings in his revenges," and what Pitt had undergone Wilkins had to undergo.

Pope describes, surely with some exaggeration, the troubles of Wilkins during the eight years between his departure from Cambridge and his being made Bishop of Chester. He was a man whom no misfortunes could crush—elastic, resolute, resourceful master of his fate,—

"Merses profundo, pulchrior evenit."

He had many friends and a great reputation ; they brought him various preferments, —the lectureship at Gray's Inn, the vicarage of St

Lawrence Jewry, and the Deanery of Ripon, within a few years after his banishment from Cambridge. Preferment may not have brought him happiness, but it must have prevented his fortunes from being, as Pope says they were, "as low as they could be." He suffered indeed one calamity—a cruel one to a man of his pursuits and tastes: in the great fire of London the vicarage house of St Lawrence Jewry was burnt, and with it were destroyed his books and the collection of scientific instruments made during his residence at Oxford with the help of the members of the club.

Add to this that he was out of favour both at Whitehall and at Lambeth on account of his marriage—for that reason "Archbishop Sheldon who had the keys of the Church for a great time in his power, and could admit unto it and keep out of it whom he pleased, I mean (Pope hastens to explain) disposed of all Ecclesiastical Preferments, entertained a strong prejudice against him." This prejudice the Archbishop, when later, on the introduction of Ward, he

came to know him better, acknowledged to have been unjust, a signal instance of Wilkins' power of winning men. The Latitudinarian was at first coldly received at Lambeth: the brother-in-law of Cromwell was not acceptable at Whitehall. His friend Ward did not desert him, but "followed up good words with answerable actions," and procured for him the Precentor's place at Exeter,—"the first step which Wilkins ascended to a better fortune."

In Charles II. he soon found a still more powerful friend. The King, who was himself the broadest of Latitudinarians, as far as Protestantism was concerned, was not repelled by Wilkins' theological views, and yielded readily to the attractions of a versatile and agreeable man of science. Science was the most creditable of Charles's tastes and occupations; the one in which he took a genuine and enduring interest.

On November 28, 1660, the Invisible College was embodied, and became a tangible reality. At a meeting held in Gresham College, twelve

persons of eminence in science and in other ways "formed the design," as the first Journal Book of the Royal Society records, "of founding a College for the promotion of Physico-Mathematicall Experimentall Learning." Among those present were Rooke, Petty, Wren, and Wilkins: a committee was formed, of which Wilkins was appointed chairman: the King gave his approval to the scheme drawn up by the committee, and offered to become a member of the new College: in 1662 he gave it the Charter of Incorporation which passed the Great Seal on July 13th of that year. Wilkins was not chosen President; that honour was given to Lord Brouncker.

The Royal Society of London for the Improvement of Natural Knowledge (its official title) took knowledge for its province; that is, natural knowledge, of Nature, Art, and Works, in preference to, though not necessarily to the exclusion of, moral and metaphysical philosophy, history and language. The experiments, its chief work, were to be productive both of light and fruit:

the influence of Bacon is so great and evident that he might in a sense be called the founder of the Royal Society. Sprat's real preface to his History is Cowley's famous ode. The poet speaks of philosophy—*i.e.*, natural philosophy, as the captive and slave of Authority and Words, set free by Bacon: its followers he likens to the Children of Israel wandering aimlessly from one desert to another till Moses brought them to the border of the promised land. The stately lines may well be quoted here:—

“From these and all long errors of the way
In which our wandering predecessors went,
And like th' old Hebrews many years did stray
In desarts but of small extent,
Bacon like Moses led us forth at last,
The barren Wilderness he past,
Did on the very Border stand
Of the blest promised land,
And from the Mountain Top of his Exalted Wit
Saw it himself and shew'd us it.
But Life did never to one Man allow
Time to discover Worlds and conquer too;
Nor can so short a line sufficient be
To fadome the vast depths of Nature's sea.”

Like all human institutions, the Royal Society was criticised, feared, misunderstood, and ridiculed. There is evidence of this in Sprat's anxiety to show that experiments "are not dangerous to the Universities nor to the Church of England," a contention which now would be admitted or denied if the term "experiments" were first defined. He labours, too, to show that they are not dangerous to the Christian religion, either its belief or practice. His remarks on this question are of great interest and value, and are strangely modern. He pleads that "experiments will be beneficial to our wits and writers." Alas! the wits at least benefited in a way which Sprat did anticipate. Shadwell in his 'Virtuoso' found material for profane merriment in some of the unquestionably absurd inquiries made or suggested by the natural philosophers. "Science was then only just emerging from the Mists of Superstition." Astrology and Alchemy still infected Astronomy, Chemistry, and Medicine. A Fellow of the Royal Society, along with the Puritan, made a ridiculous figure on the stage.

But Puritanism and Natural Philosophy both survived the "test of truth," and were better for the ordeal.¹

In 1668, through the influence of the Duke of Buckingham, Wilkins was made Bishop of Chester. The position of a Bishop in some ways resembles that of the Head of a College: Fellows are like canons and archdeacons; undergraduates are the "inferior clergy." The Bishop showed in the management of his diocese the moderation, tact, and charity which had made him a successful Warden. He brought back into the Church of England, or into loyalty to that Church, many ministers who had been ejected from their livings for non-compliance with the Act of Uniformity: his success in this good work was due to his "soft interpretation of the terms of conformity." They needed softening; no part of Macaulay's 'History of England' is more striking and instructive than his account in chapter ii. of

¹ See Mr Pearson's instructive and amusing article on "The Virtuoso" in the 'Nineteenth Century,' November 1909.

the sufferings of the Puritans and Nonconformists of all descriptions. "It was made a crime to attend a dissenting place of worship. A new and most unreasonable test was imposed on divines who had been deprived of their benefices for Nonconformity; and all who refused to take that test were prohibited from coming within five miles of any town which was governed by a corporation, of any town which was represented in Parliament, or of any town where they had themselves resided as ministers. The magistrates by whom these vigorous statutes were to be enforced, were in general men inflamed by party spirit, and by remembrances of wrongs suffered in the time of the Commonwealth. The jails were therefore soon crowded with dissenters, and among the sufferers were some of whose genius and virtue any Christian society might well be proud."

It is probable that Chester jail was less crowded than other jails in England, and that dissenters were allowed to come within five miles of Chester, even to the Bishop's palace.

Wilkins, like many "moderate" men, had convictions, and was ready to make sacrifices in their defence. Not only in his diocese, but in the House of Lords, he pleaded for a lenient treatment of dissenters. In reference to the second Conventicle Act, Wilkins gained for himself, in the view of all right-minded men, especial honour. He argued earnestly against the Bill in the Upper House. Even when the king desired him to be silent, he replied "That he thought it an ill thing, both in conscience and policy, and therefore as an Englishman and a Bishop, he was bound to oppose it." Being still further requested by Charles not to go to the House while the Bill was pending, his answer was "That by the law and constitution of England, and by his Majesty's favour, he had a right to debate and vote: and he was neither afraid nor ashamed to own his opinion in this matter, and to act pursuant to it, and the king was not offended with his freedom."¹

¹ This is an abbreviation of the passage in Burnet's 'History of his Own Time,' vol. i. p. 272. First edition.

He did not hesitate to endanger his favour with the king—perhaps not with him, for Charles was not by temper a persecutor, but with the party then in power. From the ‘Church of England in the Reigns of the Stuarts,’ I quote another instance of his moderation and clear-headedness in the fierce controversies of his time. In a conversation with Cosin, Bishop of Devon, who had censured him for his moderation, Wilkins frankly told him that he was a better friend to the Church of England than his lordship—“for while you,” says he, “are for setting the top on the picqued end and downwards, you won’t be able to keep it up any longer than you keep whipping and scourging; whereas I am for setting the broad end downwards, and so ’twill stand of itself.” The metaphor has obvious defects, but expresses the broadness of the Broad party in the Church.

Of Wilkins’ work in his diocese few particulars are recorded: it is called by Wood the “kill Bishop see,” a name which now happily it does not deserve. His had been a laborious life, and

the last years of it must have been full of difficulties and anxieties to the friend of an unpopular cause. After four years' tenure of his bishopric, he died in the year 1672, at the age of fifty-eight, in Tillotson's house : he was buried in the churchyard of St Lawrence Jewry, his old vicarage. His College pupil, William Lloyd, preached the funeral sermon, in which he defends him against the charge of having looked with too much favour on the dissenters, urging as his excuse, "the vehemence of his desire to bring the Dissenters off their prejudices, and reduce them to the Unity of the Church"; no bad defence.

It is pleasant to turn from Wilkins' public to his private life. There are many allusions to him in the Diaries of Pepys and Evelyn.

Pepys made his first acquaintance with Wilkins in 1665 : he was now a man widely known in London society, especially among learned men and natural philosophers. Pepys describes his first visit to him, paid at his house, then probably the Vicarage of St Lawrence Jewry. "And so to Dr Merritt" (a Fellow of the Royal Society),

“and fine discourse among them to my great joy, so sober and ingenious: he is now upon finishing his discourse of a Universal Character.” At a dinner-party later he met Wilkins, when “I choosing to sit next Dr Wilkins, Sir George Ent, and others whome I value, there talked of several things; Dr Wilkins of the Universal Speech, of which he hath a book coming out, and did first inform me how man was certainly made for society, without which he would be a very mean creature.” In 1668 the book was published, carried home by Pepys, and carefully perused. He enjoyed the account given by Wilkins of the ark, and his solutions of the difficulties raised even in his time. The solutions, Pepys says, “do please me mightily, and are much beyond whatever I heard of the subject.” This is easy to believe. He must have been impressed by Wilkins’ contention that “few were the several species of beasts and fowls which were to be in the Arke”; a consequence of the fundamental error of his system, the belief that nature was easily classified, and her classes few. In Pepys’

last important reference to Wilkins, he tells us that he "heard talk that Dr Wilkins, my friend the Bishop of Chester, shall be removed to Winchester and be made Lord Treasurer: though this be foolish talk, I do gather he is a mighty rising man, as being a Latitudinarian, and the Duke of Buckingham his friend."

Evelyn was a warm friend of Wilkins, and a frequent visitor at his lodgings in Wadham. In 1654 he came to Oxford with his wife and daughter, as London visitors do now for a weekend, or for Commemoration. He "supped at a magnificent entertainment in Wadham Hall, invited by my dear and excellent friend Dr Wilkins," and met "that miracle of a youth, Mr Christopher Wren." Two years later, on another visit, he "dined with that most obliging and universally curious person Dr Wilkins at Wadham College." There he saw many wonderful things—transparent apiaries, a statue that spoke through a tube, a way-wiser (*i.e.*, a kind of pedometer), dials, perspectives, mathematical and magical curiosities, the property or inven-

tion of Wilkins or of "that prodigious young scholar Christopher Wren." Alas! there are none of these magical curiosities in the Warden's lodgings now; they were taken to London and lost in the Great Fire.

In 1665 Evelyn heard his friend preach before the Lord Mayor at St Paul's on the text, "Obedience is better than sacrifice,"—a curious text for him to choose, for it may be interpreted in more ways than one, and might have been taken by an enemy as a summary of the preacher's own career. Under the same entry Evelyn describes his friend as one "who took great pains to preserve the Universities from the ignorant and sacrilegious commanders who would have demolished all places and persons that pretended to learning"; another indication among many that the "obliging" Dr Wilkins was not invertebrate.

In the same year Evelyn, calling at The Durdans, the home of Wilkins' former pupil, Lord Berkeley, found there a remarkable group, Petty, Rooke, and Wilkins, amusing themselves

with "contrivances for chariots, and for a wheel for one to run races in,"—the first forms possibly of a hansom, and a cycle. "Perhaps," continues Evelyn, "three such persons were not to be found elsewhere in Europe for parts and ingenuity." Lord Rosebery, we may safely presume, would be glad to see them at The Durdans now.

In November 1668, Evelyn went to London, "invited to the consecration of that excellent person, the Dean of Ripon, now made Bishop of Chester: Dr Tillotson preached." Then he went to a sumptuous banquet in the Hall of Ely House, where were "the Duke of Buckingham, Judges, the Lord Keeper, Noblemen, and innumerable other company, who were honourers of this incomparable man, universally beloved by all who knew him."

Tillotson, who married Wilkins' stepdaughter, and may therefore have been prejudiced, though such relationships give rise to prejudices of various kinds, was deeply attached to him. He edited and wrote a preface to the book on 'Natural Religion,' and did the same pious duty

in respect of the 'Sermons Preached on Several Occasions,' taking opportunity in the preface to defend him against the censures of Antony Wood. He edited also a pamphlet of an attractive title, which the writer has not seen and fain would see, 'The Moderate Man, the best subject in Church and State, proved from the arguments of Wilkins, with Tillotson's opinions on the subject.' Between them they must make a strong case for the Moderate Man. Tillotson says of his father-in-law: "I think I may truly say that there are or have been few in this age and nation so well known, and greatly esteemed, and favoured by many persons of high rank and quality, and of singular worth and eminence in all the learned professions." This eulogy has perhaps the ring of a time when rank and quality were made more of than they are now made, but it is quoted as an illustration of the change of feeling which would make it now impossible or indecorous to praise a bishop because he got on well with great people: allowance must be made for the difference

between the seventeenth and the twentieth century.

Funeral sermons are not always the naked truth, but Lloyd's fine saying about Wilkins bears on it the stamp of sincerity : " It was his way of friendship not so much to oblige men as to do them good."

Burnet adds another testimony to Wilkins' singular power of winning affection. He writes : " Wilkins was a man of as great a mind, as true a judgement, as eminent virtues, and of as good a soul, as any one I ever knew. He was naturally ambitious, but was the wisest clergyman I ever knew. He was a lover of mankind, and had a delight in doing good."

Burnet was a partisan, but these are the words of more than partisanship. In his ' History of his Own Time ' he introduces Wilkins to his readers in very distinguished company, among the Latitudinarians — Whichcote, Cudworth, Tillotson, Lloyd, and Stillingfleet,—of whom he says that if such men had not appeared, of another stamp than their predecessors, " the Church had quite

lost its esteem over the nation." Clarendon, whom he calls "more the friend of the Bishops than of the Church," had, in his opinion, endowed them and the higher clergy too well, and they were sunk in luxury and sloth. The Latitudinarians infused into the Church life, energy, and a sense of duty: they were, he adds, good preachers and acceptable to the king, who, "having little or no literature, but true and good sense," liked sermons "plain, clear, and short." "Incedo per ignes," but it is impossible to refrain from quoting Burnet's language, which, *mutatis mutandis*, would have expressed what High Churchmen felt towards the leaders of the Oxford movement, and with equal truth and justice.

Here Antony Wood may be called in to play the part of the *Advocatus Diaboli*. He plays it in the following passage, as always, with great vigour and enjoyment: "Dr John Wilkins, a notorious complier with the Presbyterians, from whom he obtained the Wardenship of Wadham; with the Independants and Cromwell himself,

by whose favour he did not only get a dispensation to marry (contrary to the College Statutes), but also, because he had married his sister, Master of Trinity College, Cambridge: from which being ejected at the Restoration, he faced about, and by his smooth language, insinuating preaching, flatteries, and I know not what, got among other preferments the Deanery of Ripon, and at length by the commendation of George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, a great favourer of fanaticks and atheists, the Bishopric of Chester."

The passage is inaccurate both in grammar and in facts, but it is valuable as evidence of the venomous party spirit prevalent in the seventeenth century,—a spirit to which we can easily rise superior, we whose station, property, life, do not depend on the triumph of this or that opinion. In Oxford at least we do not now say such things about each other. But in another place Wood takes a less unfavourable view of Wilkins' character, and uses about him the politest language at his command. "He was a

person of rare gifts, a noted theologist and preacher; a curious critick in several matters; an excellent mathematician and experimentalist, &c.; and I cannot say that there was anything deficient in him but a constant mind and settled principles."

This is an outline of the facts and opinions about Wilkins which have come down to us. What are we to think of him?

Unquestionably there lies against a man who prospered under Cromwell and Charles II., and was a favourite of both, a presumption of excessive pliancy, of too much readiness to adapt himself to his environment, of time-serving, if you like, and insincerity. It cannot be proved that he was not a Vicar of Bray, the title which at once suggests itself. Tolerance, geniality, and charity are virtues which have their own defects, and some measure of austerity is one of the ingredients of a perfect character. It has been said of Wilkins that two principles determined his career: a large tolerance of actions and opinions; a readiness to submit

himself to "the powers that be," let them have been established if they might. These are the marks of a wise man, and of a man supremely useful in times of bitter hatred and uncompromising revenge: they are not the marks of a hero or a martyr.

Wilkins was in fact a Trimmer. It may be said of him what has been said by Mr Herbert Paul of a more famous Trimmer, Lord Halifax (not our Lord Halifax), that "he was thoroughly imbued with the English spirit of compromise, that he had a remarkable power of understanding, even sympathetically understanding, opinions which he did not hold." Wilkins hated persecution, and that hatred nerves a Trimmer to defend unpopular persons and unpopular causes, as he did in his College and University and Diocese. Toleration has a courage of its own equal to that of fanaticism, and more useful and intelligent. It is now an easier and a safer virtue than it was two hundred and fifty years ago: it is not popular now; it was odious then, and men were impatient with those who took

no side, or changed sides for reasons good or bad.

Macaulay—who never knew a doubt, whose way was clear and easy in the struggles of his day, when reform and free trade in corn were obviously desirable and necessary—writes with contemptuous severity of the profligacy of politicians from the Restoration to the accession of the House of Hanover. “One who in such an age is determined to attain civil greatness must renounce all thought of consistency. Instead of affecting immutability in the midst of mutation, he must always be on the watch for the indications of a coming reaction. He must seize the exact moment for deserting a falling cause. He has seen so many institutions from which much had been expected produce mere disappointment, that he has no hope of improvement. There is nothing in the state which he could not, without a scruple, join in defending or destroying.” Compare with these scathing words his estimate of the character of Halifax, the Whig: “The most estimable of

the statesmen who were formed in the corrupt and licentious Whitehall of the Restoration. He was called inconsistent because the relative position in which he stood to the contending parties was perpetually varying. As well might the Polar Star be called inconsistent because it is sometimes to the east and sometimes to the west of the pointers. To have defended the ancient and legal constitution of the realm against a seditious populace at one conjunction, and against a tyrannical government at another ; to have been the foremost champion of order in the turbulent Parliament of 1680, and the foremost champion of liberty in the servile Parliament of 1685 ; to have been just and merciful to the Roman Catholics in the days of the Popish Plot, and to the Exclusionists in the days of the Rye House Plot ; this was a course which contemporaries, heated by passion, and deluded by names and badges, might not unnaturally call fickle, but which deserves a very different name from the late justice of posterity." More than one British statesman, Tory, be it observed, as well as Whig,

needs and deserves a defence like this. Alter names and dates, and it will serve as a vindication of Wilkins' deficiency in a "constant mind and settled principles." Therefore the paradox is true that a Trimmer may be a man of firmness and courage; one who is bold enough to make many enemies and few friends; who has convictions of his own, but by a power of sympathy, one of the rarest and highest mental, half moral, half intellectual, qualities, can understand opinions which he does not hold; understand and pardon, as the French say.

Whether Wilkins' tolerance was of the exalted kind, or alloyed by an admixture of that other tolerance which is no better than indifference and opportunism, it is impossible to say, for we do not know enough about him to pronounce a judgment. Our data are scanty and incoherent, scattered about in diaries and memoirs written by persons of different stations and opinions. This much is certain, that Pope, Aubrey, Sprat, Evelyn, Pepys, Tillotson, and Burnet speak of him with affection and respect:

one note runs through all their eulogies, that he was universally beloved; yet he was not one of those nonentities whom now we style amiable persons, but a man of character and power.

As a loyal son of the College, the writer is prepared to maintain that a Vicar of Bray could not have won love and admiration in his College, his University, and in his Diocese, and in a larger world than these; nor have been "*laudatus a laudatis viris.*" It is more rational to believe that Wilkins was a good and wise man, who accepted the situations in which he found himself placed, and made the best of them, being more solicitous to do good than to preserve consistency, that most negative of virtues. Let him be judged by his best, as men are most fairly judged, and by another good criterion, the times in which he lived,—times of perpetual change, confusion, and perplexity.

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